

THE LONDON READER

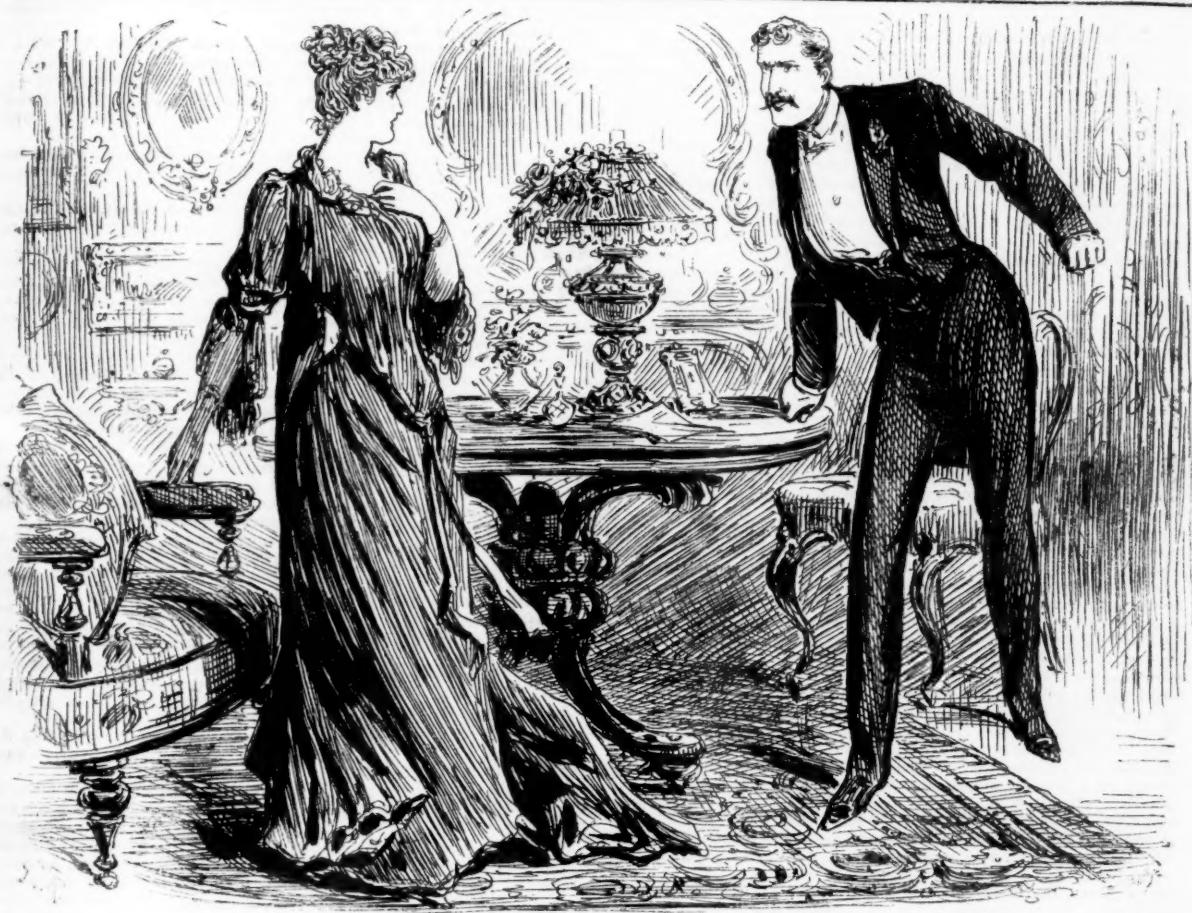
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["YOU ARE A COWARD!" SAID KIT. "YOU KNOW I DO NOT WANT TO SPEAK TO YOU! YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK OF YOU!"]

KIT.

CHAPTER XXV.

The days that followed were busy ones with Philip and pleasant ones for Kit. She insisted on keeping Chris a visitor for an indefinite period.

"Your mother doesn't want you, and I do," she cried.

There were merry hours spent with Sybil and Chris. Shopping, seeing such pictures as were to be seen at the time of year, driving, riding, going to the theatre.

The girl was absolutely happy. If it had not been for the fact that Philip could not be so much with her, and for the knowledge that would force itself upon her that Sybil's shadow had already gathered on the horizon of her life, Kit would have wanted for nothing.

The pleasant, almost affectionate intercourse which had sprung up between her cousin and herself gave her unlimited pleasure.

She could never bear malice to a single soul, and when she saw that Constance was sincerely eager to be friends, she never once allowed her mind to recall the past or imagine the cynical things which would have come so easily to a more worldly nature.

As to Maurie, the morning's light and the comfort and joy of Philip's presence soon dispelled the vague fears she had felt that night when he had spoken so recklessly and looked so strange.

She was glad she did not see very much of him, and more glad still that Sybil did not discuss her husband with her as she had been wont to do at the first.

Chris was a great delight to Kit, they had such a splendid time. They revived all their old ways, were as full of laughter and fun as two kittens.

Si Philip, coming home a little earlier than anticipated, would meet Kit flying down the stairs, her red locks dishevelled, her arms thrown about him, clinging to him with excited laughter, and imploring protection from her pursuer.

"I am the most undignified person in the

whole world," Kit would say at such moments, and Philip would wrap his arms about her and pray she might always continue young, fresh, innocent, without the faintest shadow of the world's taint in her heart and nature.

He encouraged these romps and "disgraceful goings on," as Lady Sinclair called them, when she heard details of Philip's wife from Constance.

Lena Sinclair was loyal to the backbone, she had, of course, paid a slight deference to Kit in calling upon her; but she would have no friendship with the girl.

She resented her in every sense of the word, she was Constance Marlowe's friend, and as that friend she determined that Kit had done her cousin the greatest wrong one woman could do another.

She had not forgiven Philip, but she could not forget her affection for her old friend, and that softened her anger; but Kit had no claim on either her affection or her friendship, and Lady Sinclair would have nothing to do with her at all.

She was vexed with Constance for allowing herself to drift into an intimacy with the

"red-headed boyden;" but after all it was only on a par with all her sweethearts. No other person would have shown so gentle and kind a spirit to a creature who had robbed them of the thing they most prized on earth.

Already Lady Sinclair was busy arranging a marriage between Constance and the young man who had followed her as a shadow since Sybil Leith's wedding; but, despite this, she did not allow her objection to Kit to grow less, and all the harmless amusements of our poor little heroines were regarded as so many horrors by Constance's friend. The presence of Chris she regarded as a disgrace.

"Really Philip should put his foot down, whatever they may do inside the house is one thing; though, of course, the servants are scandalized by such荒唐的 proceedings; but when it comes to running races in Hyde Park—well!"

"It was at seven o'clock in the morning, across the grass, dear. There was not a soul to see them except a workman or two."

Constance took up the gauntlet for her cousin.

"You are an angel, and Philip is a fool! He will sue his mistake, mark my words, he will rue the day he married that girl!"

Constance smiled depreciatively.

"Dear Lena, I wish you would try and like Kit a little for my sake. She is really a dear good little soul!"

"She may be the best creature on earth, I shan't like her, and I don't approve of her!" declared pretty little Lady Sinclair. "I can't bear red hair, and you know that, Constance, so why try and cram her down my throat. It makes me mad to see Philip's silly infatuation about her. She can twist him round her little finger. I wonder if he would care so much for her if he knew she could lie and behave as she did when she ran away from The Linnes, and did her best to disgrace you!"

For Constance had confided her lying story to her friend. She was bound to give some explanation for Kit's presence with Lady Mulborough, and she did not wish to lose a shade of Lady Sinclair's friendship and belief by letting the truth of the matter come out. She bound Lena to absolute secrecy and confidence before she traduced poor Kit once more, and she knew she could trust Lady Sinclair, implicitly. Nevertheless sometimes she was nervous lest in her unceasing dislike to Kit Lena might bring about an explanation and quarrel with Philip, in the course of which she might inadvertently disclose some of Constance's falsehoods, and then— Well, Constance did not care to think what Philip might not do. She knew he did not trust her, she knew he regarded her friendship with Kit by no means with pleasure, and she felt sure he kept a close watch, and upon her every movement. She did not want to quarrel with him, at least not just yet—not until things had developed themselves a little more.

Things were very slow to develop themselves. Constance grew impatient beyond control at times—she was so keen-eyed, she watched so carefully, and there was nothing, absolutely nothing, to reward her.

Her scheme of vengeance was by no means an easy one—the presence of Chris was to her an absolute block—Kit's deep sympathy and constant companionship with Sybil was another. However, there was no hurry. Constance was not the woman she was, without knowing full well that Maurice was not silent all this time without some good reason. She saw him often and she could almost read his emotion in his moody face. For the first time she regretted that they could not have been more sympathetic at their united forces would have been so strong in bringing about the result they both had at heart, as it was they had to work apart.

Innocent, and happily ignorant of the malice that so closely surrounded her, Kit went on her way rejoicing. Growing more and more beautiful and precious in her hus-

band's eyes, revealing new beauties of mind and nature every day, and learning slowly and surely the most exquisite lesson a woman's heart can know, her love for Philip was growing almost beyond her comprehension. Of all her little jaunts with Chris there was none that gave her more pleasure than to run away from town in the careful protection of her "chum," and spend a few hours with Lady Milborough.

She loved to hear, over and over again all the old stories of Philip's goodness and nobility; they were stories that never grew stale, and she loved to wander out into the old garden, though it was leafless and bare now, it was to her one of the most beautiful spots on earth. She would walk under the old trees, and in fancy conjure up the summer days when she had walked there with Philip beside her, growing to care for her slowly and surely, and becoming to her the pleasantest and truest friend she possessed. And then that wonderful day when he had spoken to her, and taken her in his arms and kissed away her tears, wrapping her about with his love to protect her from that day henceforth. Chris always refrained from teasing her on their return home from these visits. He had, deep buried in his young, honest heart, a sympathy with the girl in these moods, and he would sit silent, thinking his own thoughts and learning for the first time a little of the sorrow that must come to all hearts, as he felt how hopeless his adoration and love was. Yet he was happy, too, for he knew Kit was unchanged, and Philip gave him his frank, undoubtful friendship.

"I am afraid Maurice will be jealous," Philip said to Kit one evening as she sat on his knee after dinner. "I told him he might regard himself as your occasional cavalier, and you have never employed him once. You are a staunch little bird—you prefer your Chris to anyone in the world after me I do believe."

Kit nodded her head.

"I do," she said honestly. "I know Chris and I love him, he is such a brick." She paused a moment, "and then Captain Montgomery has Sybil, and he ought to be her cavalier."

Philip kissed the beautiful hair and throat.

"And is he not, little one?" he asked.

Kit answered him hurriedly, her voice was sad, she spoke as though some thought must have a vent.

"Philip," she said, "I fear—I fear some times Sybil is not too happy!"

Philip frowned. He woke out of his dreamland, and all the vague fears and doubts of Maurice returned to him anew.

"Does she complain of—" he began.

"Complain! Sybil!" Kit looked at him, already she regretted she had said so much. Why, Sybil would die before she said a word against him. She loves him with all her heart and soul—almost," she buried her face on his shoulder for a moment, "almost, she finished in a whisper, "as I do you!"

"My heart—my love," Philip said, pressing her close in his arms, and then he was silent for awhile, "I hope you are not right, little one," he said, when he spoke, "I cannot bear to think that Maurice—"

"Oh, it is because Sybil loves too much, I fear," Kit said, hastily. Never from her lips should Philip hear wrong of the man he had loved so well and so long, and yet it was so contrary to her nature to have anything secret from him.

He looked at her quizzically, yet half sadly.

"If that is so then you—"

She interrupted him with a kiss.

"Ah, no, you are you—"

It would be impossible to love you too much; but then there is no other man like you, my Philip."

He smiled at her tenderly.

"You will make me vain, little one," he answered; and then he changed the subject,

and asked what the movements of the evening were.

"Chris and I are coming to bear you speak."

He shook his head.

"It is not fit for you. It is in the wilds of the East end. You must not come, my darling."

"Oh Philip!"

Tears of disappointment sprang to her eyes; but Philip was firm. The constituents he was about to address were called from the roughest class, and he could not bear that Kit should go among them.

"You shall here me another time when I am in a more respectable neighbourhood."

Kit put her head on his shoulder again.

"I shall be glad when the speaking is all done, and then I shall have you to myself again."

"You are not tired then of your old husband?" Philip said, smilingly, as he rose to go.

Kit threatened him with all sorts of dire punishment, and went with him while he put on his coat.

"I shall sit up for you, and if you find Chris tattered and feathered when you come home, you will know it is the outcome of my meeting. He has become awful. I have not a moment's peace."

Chris's long figure lounged into the hall at this speech. Philip slapped the young fellow on the back.

"I give her into your charge, Chris, see that she behaves herself, and is a good girl."

"I'll look after her, never fear," Chris said, the colour mounting to his face; though the words were spoken in jest. He knew Philip liked him, and he was grateful and honoured by the old man's friendship.

Philip stopped for an instant at his club. As he left it again and ran down the steps,向着 Maurice, they exchanged a few words and then Philip said,—

"I hear Sybil is away. Why don't you run in and see my wife for half-an-hour. She will be delighted. She wanted to come and hear me speak; but I could not let her come to night, my audience will be a rough one, and she is alone with young Hartnett. You might cheer her up; tell her I sent you."

To himself, as he rolled away, Philip was thinking over what Kit had said about Sybil.

"Surely Maurice cannot fail to make her happy. I know he is selfish; but he loves her, and it is so early, and there is great good in him I am sure. Perhaps if he only gets friendly with my darling, she may be able to say something in her soft little way and do good. What an element of good there is about her. She would draw it out of a stone. How little I thought of the treasure that was coming into my life that day I first saw her!"

Maurice stood and stared after the brougham.

"He is a fool!" he said to himself, in a quiet, dogged way, and then he went into the club and sat down thinking for awhile. When he rose it was with determination in his mind. "That lout of a boy is there, but I will get rid of him somehow. I must think of an excuse."

He hailed a hansom, and was driven to the Desmond's house. Just as he was alighting the door opened, and Chris came out.

There was not much liking between the two. Chris, with that shrewdness which was his only cleverness, reading Captain Montgomery pretty clearly, and, as a master of fact, doubting him; and Maurice objecting to Chris for a dozen reasons, but chief of all because Kit was so attached to him.

"I want to see Lady Desmond, I have just run against Philip, and he asked me to bring her a message."

"She is in," Chris said, in his abrupt way. He had allowed himself to be engaged by Kit into going down to hear Philip's speech.

"I must not go, but you can," the girl cried.

"Oh! Chris, you must go. I want to hear all about it!"

"But Sir Philip said I was to take care of you," Chris began, dubiously.

Kit stamped her foot, just as in the old days, and dashed fire out of her eyes.

"As if I could not take care of myself, booby, and as if I would let you take care of me," and then she changed her key. "Chris, you are an angel. You will go, won't you, darling? and remember, Chris, you are to applaud loudly, and make a great noise and fuss over him. Oh! how I wish Philip would only let me go!"

"On! we all know what a row you can make when you like," Chris said, ungallantly, and then he let her push him into his coat, and she blew him a kiss as he went down the hall.

"I shall love you for ever," she cried, and she dashed into her boudoir, and drew a chair up to the blazing fire, and threw her lovely little person into it, to sit there and dream about Philip and follow in her imagination all the events of the night.

This speech was an important one, and might decide everything in his favour, therefore Kit was in great excitement.

She was soon lost in her dream, while Chris and Maurice Montgomery exchanged a few remarks, and then Chris got into a cab and was driven away, and Maurice followed the bather up the stairs.

"Sir Philip has given me a message to deliver to Lady Desmond," he said; and the servant, who had known him many years, saw nothing strange in his late visit.

He threw open the door of the boudoir, waking Kit from her happy dreams and ushered in Maurice with a curt—

"Captain Montgomery, my lady!"

Kit turned in her chair, then rose to her feet. She was at a disadvantage in this moment. All the calmness and coolness that had individualized her former meetings with Maurice deserted her. She lapsed for an instant into the shrinking, timid Kit he had first known, as he came towards her easily, nonchalantly, holding out his hand with a conventional greeting on his lips, and a smile of triumph in his eyes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Kit recovered herself almost immediately, and though she had been terribly startled, Maurice's name, followed by his immediate entrance, had destroyed the pleasure of her thoughts.

She barely touched his hand. The butler was in the room or she would not have done that much, and then as the door closed and they were alone she turned to him.

She was trembling in every limb, he could see it plainly. Her appearance made him muter. He had never seen her as she was to-night.

She wore a loose robe of clinging silk, soft and heavy, of a deep, warm red, her white throat and arms showed like marble from the contrast, and her hair seemed to gain new beauty from the colouring of the silk.

It was a daring thing to wear, but it had been her own fancy, and the result certainly justified the idea.

In her hair, which was wound into a loose coronet, she wore a star of diamonds and rubies, that quivered and shot a thousand lights, and at her throat, holding the folds of her dress together was another star.

Her beauty was almost bewildering. Even as her white, troubled face recalled a momentary remembrance of the girl he had been wont to meet in the moonlight—the recollection went, and amazement and admiration came in its stead. Although she bore herself quietly and held her head haughtily—Kit was dreadfully nervous, for the first time she was afraid of this handsome, determined-looking man whom she had so quietly and successfully ignored up to now.

Her voice trembled a little as she spoke.

"I—I am sorry you have chosen so late an hour for your visit, Captain Montgomery. My husband has just gone out, and—and I know he will not return for some hours."

Maurice answered her dooly.

"I know—it is the reason for my being here. I met Philip at the Carlton. He told me you were alone, asked me to come and see you, and said I was to tell you he had sent me!"

Kit's courage came back to her by degrees, her courage and her contempt.

"I am sorry," she said, coldly, "that you should have misunderstood my husband. Above all things he studies my pleasure, and he knows that in his absence I prefer to spend my evening alone if I cannot have the society of a friend. You will forgive me if I seem rude, but—" she turned to put her hand on the bell. Maurice, pale to his lips stood in the way.

"No," he said burriedly, fiercely. "No—you shall not dismiss me yet. I have something to say to you, Kit."

She grew pale as he was, but her courage and her contempt grew greater and greater.

"I do not want to speak to you. You can have nothing to say to me that I can care to hear. Please understand that now and always." She moved away a few steps. "Of course, I cannot force you to go away," she said, coldly, "but I can go myself."

Maurice moved after her, and stood before her, his hands dropped to his side, his face fierce with his anger.

"You shall hear me! You shall hear me!" he said, his last shred of self-respect and honour going from him.

Kit drew back from him, the pallor of her face was made greater by the contrast of her hair and her gown. She was trembling from real fear. She had never known such fear before, she had never been forced into such warfare. She did not understand it nor know how to meet it. She was by nature proud and dignified, unusually so all things considered, cold when the circumstances demanded it, but she was only a woman, and it was her very youth and natural innocence that had led her into the difficulty which now stared her in the face.

Had she been of different fibre, had she had the heart and mind of Constance Marlowe things would never have come to this pass. She would have foreseen the danger ahead of her, and have temporised with Maurice, have treated him gently, disguising her real feelings under a mask of outward civility, instead of letting him see so clearly her dislike and scorn. That would have been the movement of a woman of the world. But Kit was not a woman of the world, she had studied nothing but the truth of her feelings. She had treated Maurice as she felt he ought to be treated, coldly and proudly. She knew he was not a good man, but she had never dreamed it possible a man could be so base and wrong as he now showed himself to be. She had imagined of course that he would understand it was only the difficulty of her position as Philip Desmond's wife and his own wife a friend that allowed her even to extend to him the bare courtesy she had given him.

She had not much worldly knowledge; but her woman's intuition prompted her to know that ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have been relieved when they found they had escaped the consequences of their folly so easily as he had done, and that nothing remained from that midsummer madness under the moon but forgetfulness. Her anger against him now was greater than she had ever felt in her life as yet. The memory of Sybil gave it strength, and the thoughts of her own dear husband and protector added to that strength.

"You are a coward! A coward!" she said with fierce, hot anger and agitation. "You know I do not want to speak to you, you know what I think of you. You must know what a bad, wicked, wrong man, I think you, and yet," she caught her breath, "and yet"

you come to me like this and insult me in my own house when Philip is away, and I have no one to help me." Her heart beat so quickly it almost choked her. She drew back farther from him and from his eyes, that had such a cruel, glittering look in them, tears were in her throat, and blinding her sight, but she struggled to conquer her weakness, and she succeeded to a marvellous degree notwithstanding without letting him see what an effort it was.

If he had been inclined to be manly and generous, her frank confession of contempt would have swept this mood on one side; as it was, however, Maurice never for a single instant intended to lose the opportunity he had grasped with such difficulty.

His jealousy, his vanity, his temper overruled all other feelings, and Kit's open warfare was something that roused his brute nature to its fullest extent.

"I know none of these things," he answered her, in a dogged set fashion. "What I do know is, that your clever attempt at acting does not deceive me as it does the other tools. I know you, Kit, and I know that you are not the sort of being who forgets easily. A few months ago you learnt to love me, deny it if you can. You learnt to love me then, you love me now, and you will love me all your life!"

She spoke no word as he ceased. His eyes resting on her saw her shudder and draw back from him still farther.

This action spoke to him more eloquently than any speech. If ever a woman held any man to be contemptible, unworthy, dishonourable this girl held him to be that man.

The realization of this made him mad.

"Darn this, deny it!" he said, roughly, his handsome face distorted, by his passion, into almost a hideous one. "Remember the nights you used to steal out of the Lithia house and join me under the trees in the Square garden, remember all we said there in the moonlight, and then attempt to deny your love for me if you can!"

Kit stood looking at him. Her heart was beating fast, so fast as to be almost a pain in her breast; but contempt, horror, dislike of this man was stronger than her fear.

"You are a coward!" she said. "Love you!—you! whom I know to be so base, so worthless. Love you!" she looked him straight in the eyes with her own magnificent orbs, fierce almost from the vehemence of her anger and disgust. "Love you! I despise you from the bottom of my heart, and you know it. And now, please, will you go? You offer an insult to my husband as well as myself by remaining here any longer when you dare to hold such wicked thoughts. If you refuse to show me the courtesy due to a woman, I must remind you that you pretend to call yourself Philip's friend, and that a woman I love very dearly has the misfortune to be your wife; with these—"

She broke off suddenly, abruptly, for the door opened at that minute. She moved forward with a half-broken cry of joy as Chris came in, followed by Constance Marlowe.

There was a moment's silence, awkward and uncomfortable. Chris looked very red in the face, and began speaking in his odd, jerky fashion.

"I forgot my umbrella; I knew I couldn't make much noise without it, so I came back, and then I thought I might as well stay as I found Miss Marlowe on the stairs."

He gave Constance a sharp look out of his honest blue eyes. He never trusted her, and he felt, though, of course, he could not be sure, that he had double reason for doubting her at this moment.

Constance, seeing everything and understanding it all, was laughing easily at the exploded her sudden appearance.

Chris had driven round from Lady Sinclair's on the chance of finding Kit at home and alone, and had arrived just before Mr. Hornion had returned.

"I knew Sir Philip was speaking in some terrible earnest spot, and I felt I should probably find you in. I am in luck's way for once."

She spoke the truth in the last words, she was certainly in luck's way to have crept so softly up to the door, and have stood there listening to the quick, passionate words that had passed within between the two whom she had set herself to watch so carefully.

Her heart was beating fast with excitement. She had wanted a clue only, and now she was in possession of the whole secret—and what a disgraceful secret it was!

There came quite a glow of righteous horror and indignation into Constance's breast as she recalled Maurice's loudly uttered words.

To Constance his rough, rude epitome of what had passed conveyed everything that was base and shameful.

She was not in the least impressed by the absolute innocence that had rung in every tone of Kit's voice. There had been no denial of Maurice's statement, there had been no renunciation of the fact of the stolen meetings in the moonlight.

Constance's triumph almost betrayed itself in her face as she talked on easily to Kit. She, of course, noticed nothing strange in the girl's pale face and quivering limbs—now that the reaction had come. Kit looked as though she was going to faint—not did she appear to evince the smallest curiosity as to the cause of Captain Montgomery's sulky manner, in which she differed considerably from Chris.

Kit's boyish friend stood looking from one to the other in a state of mental trouble, amounting to pain in his great, honest heart.

Something was wrong, very wrong he knew, but what that something was he could not divine. He only knew that Kit looked as though she had gone through some sudden, sharp illness, and he felt a hot rush of anger and doubt towards Maurice as he realized that this trouble must be of his making.

Maurice was not in the least deceived by Constance's manner. He knew that she must have overheard all, and though it made him furious for the moment, there followed a sort of savage satisfaction afterwards as he realized the punishment that was in store for Kit.

He hated Kit in this moment, and yet he had never known how much he really cared for her till now, when his ears were ringing with her loathing and horror of him.

This knowledge only increased his rage and the passion of his admiration at the same time.

His angry eyes met Constance's once as she laughed and chatted on, he seemed to read an offer of alliance in their clear, cold gaze, and though he disliked her cordially just as much as ever, he felt certain contentment in permitting her to ally herself with him in this affair.

No definite plan came into his head in this moment, he was too angry, too savagely disappointed, and his vanity was smirking too much for him to do anything but nurse his pain.

By degrees he adopted Constance's manner, however, and joined in her conversation, and after about a quarter of an hour he approached Kit to take his departure.

"Au revoir, Lady Desmond," he said, holding out his hand, with a faint smile. "I have already paid you too long a visitation, you look very tired, it is cruel to keep you so late from your rest. I dare say you and Miss Marlowe want to have——"

Constance broke in quickly.—

"No, as you say it is cruel to keep this poor child out of her bed, she looks like a tired white flower. You are only a baby, after all, Kit. You ought to go to sleep at dusk every night." she came up to the girl and kissed her affectionately. "I will run and see you tomorrow, dear."

Then she turned to Maurice.

"If you like to be very nice you can see me safely home, Captain Montgomery," she said. Maurice bowed.

"Delighted," he answered, of course; and then they passed out of the room, leaving Kit standing white, trembling, and silent, just as she had been when Constance came in.

She had made great progress in her bearing and manner of late, but she had all to learn as yet in the art of dissimulation. The shock of the night's events had deprived her of courage and strength, and she betrayed this fact in every line of her face and form.

Chris accompanied Miss Marlowe and Maurice down the stairs. Constance's laughing, easy manner jarred on him, though he was not skilled enough in the world's knowledge to understand why. All he knew was that Kit was in trouble, and Maurice Montgomery was the cause of that trouble.

He clenched his strong fists, and wished suddenly he could call on the handsome young soldier to stand and give an account of himself; but he abdicated his anger as he remembered Sir Philip.

If anyone should have need to defend Kit that defender must be her husband, and no one else.

He watched Constance and Maurice drive away together, and the uneasiness and strange, uncomfortable feelings he experienced grew greater as he went slowly up the stairs again.

He found Kit leaning against the mantel-shelf, her face buried on her arms.

She turned as he came towards her.

"Oh! Chris! Chris, dear!" she said, and there was a cry of deepest pain in her voice.

Chris took her slender form into his arms, he smoothed her hair softly with his big rough hand, and held her close to his honest, loving heart. His voice was not very dear, and he could not see very distinctly.

There was a pain in his heart which Kit would never know of, it was his own secret, and he could share it with no one; but with this sorrow and with the other pain called up by her distress there ran a great joy in that she clung to his friendship, and found a comfort in his presence.

He asked her no questions; although he longed to know what had happened, so that he might help her all he could; but Chris's nature was full of the truest sympathy. He might be rough, boyish and unpolished; but his sympathy was exquisite, delicate in the fullest sense of the word, and touched with a tact, which one would have imagined almost incompatible with his youth and ignorance.

Kit rested in his arms, her face on his shoulder. She was trembling still from her fear, from the horror with which Maurice's words and manner had inspired her. It was a joy to feel herself safe with such a dear reliable friend.

They stood for a few moments in silence, and then Chris spoke.

"You must go to bed, Kit. You're just as jolly-looking as a good-sized ghost, and I don't know what Sir Philip will say when he sees you."

Kit started. She had meant to sit up for her husband; but all at once she realized she could not meet him to night, and let him read the change on her face. The story she had to tell him was one that would give him deep grief; for she knew he had loved Maurice almost as his own child, and this story of the young man's dishonour and falsehood would touch him to the quick.

He would come home happy and excited from the political meeting. She could not speak the words she must speak at such a moment; she felt now that she had been wrong to have been silent all this time. Things had grown to that which she had never imagined in her innocence. She had thought to bury the secret of Maurice's cruelty to herself in her heart of hearts, to let no one have the faintest knowledge of it; but she had reckoned without Maurice, and his own hand had forced her to expose him and to give deep

sorrow to the man she loved better than her life.

She hated the thought of the morrow, of the moment when she must give this pain to her honourable, noble husband; but she had no alternative. Her own pride demanded she should speak, and so she said good-night to Chris, and went slowly and sadly up to her room, she determined that Philip must know all before another day had gone.

Alas! poor little Kit. She knew not what that day would bring forth.

(To be continued.)

HER FATHER'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—(continued.)

THREWELL continued to gaze upon the woman's worn features with sickening terror. His rotund figure seemed to shrink within itself. His round face seemed to gather itself up into a thousand wrinkles. His heavy, thick lips trembled, and he seemed suddenly afflaid with an ague.

Whoever and whatever the strange seamstress was, she had a remarkable influence over the wicked schemer before her.

As she remarked the effect of her presence, Mrs. Amry drew up her tall figure, her face grew stern, and she seemed to assume the character of a Nemesis.

"I am alive, Vincent Threwell, and here," she exclaimed in solemn tones that made him shudder. "For years I have followed your steps without finding you. I have traversed this kingdom on foot and alone, in sunshine and in rain, in cold and in heat, and the one thing that has kept me alive has been the hope of finding you. And at last I have overtaken you."

The last words were spoken exultantly, and as he heard them Threwell bent his head upon his hands, in an attitude of despair.

"You have not asked why I am here," said the woman, after a brief silence.

"I know already," was the husky response. "You can have but one errand."

"Is there any good in your heart Vincent Threwell?" asked Mrs. Amry. "You seem overcome by the sight of me. Does my face recall happier days, when you were young and unstained by crime? Does it awaken within you a single regret for your career of guilt?"

She knew in her heart that it did not. But she scarcely comprehended the manner and attitude of Threwell, and therefore endeavoured to place the most charitable construction upon it.

"I suppose," said Threwell irrelevantly, "that you have brought officers with you—that they are even now in this very garden?"

"No, I am alone."

This was an unfortunate admission.

Threwell raised his head with something of his former spirit, the livid hue of his face gave place to a natural redness, and he recovered at once his former coolness and self-possession.

"No one knows you are here?" he asked. "You have told no one my story?"

"No one."

How Threwell's eyes gleamed then.

"I have told no one as yet," said Mrs. Amry, feeling uneasy by the change in his manner. "I know of your doings here, Vincent Threwell. I know how you have schemed to obtain the hand of Miss Dore, and wish it her fortune and a social position. I know, too, how you are oppressing her poor invalid father, who never harmed you!"

"You do?"

"Yes, and though for years I have thought of nothing but avenging upon you my own bitter wrongs, I am willing to consider mercy now if you will but be just. Miss Dore was kind to me the other day and fed and

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sheltered me, and I would recompense her for it a thousand-fold. She is a poor, motherless young girl and I, whom you have made childless, worse than childless, feel my heart yearn in pity towards her. Vincent Therwell, if you will release Sir Allyn Dara and his daughter and go away, leaving them to themselves, I will promise to forego my revenge and leave you in peace!"

The strange seamstress spoke as if she believed he would gladly accept the terms she offered.

"You are mild in your demands," he replied, with a sneer. "But suppose I refuse?"

"Refuse at your peril!" was her stern and quick response. "So surely as you refuse to release these innocent people from the bonds you have placed upon them, so surely will I denounce you for what you are! I will even bring the officers of justice to this house to-night——"

Therwell interrupted her by a cry of rage and fear.

His hand disappeared within the breast of his coat, and when he withdrew it he held within his grasp something that glittered in the starlight.

"You should have known me better than to threaten me," he said, in a hissing tone. "You will not betray me. Swear to me that you will not!"

It was a face glowing with murderous intent that he turned towards her. His eyes had the ferocious gleam of a wolf's, and his mouth had an expression that struck the woman with instant comprehension of her peril.

Suddenly she turned to flee.

He was ready for the movement. With a single leap, he gained her side, clutched at her throat to prevent her screaming for assistance, and demanded her oath of secrecy.

Though her tongue was motionless, her eyes expressed her refusal.

"Then your blood be upon your head!" he said.

There was a flash of steel in the dim light, a hollow moan, the sound of a heavy falling body, and then, pale and scared, Therwell rushed from the gardens, feeling the brand of Cain upon his soul!

The star-light shone down upon a prostrate figure in the shadow of the fountain; upon a face ghastly in its pallor; upon eyes that stared upwards vacantly, and upon a bosom in which the heart beat faintly—but still beat!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The ills of love, not those of fate, I fear:
These I can brave, but those cannot bear.

Dryden.

The remainder of her first day of captivity passed without any farther event to Lady Chellis. She was served with another supply of bread and water, which, like the former, she sent away untouched. The ex-governess did not exchange a word with her upon the occasion of her second visit, and withdrew as quickly as possible, leaving the young bride to the pleasanter society of her own thoughts, and to the companionship of the waves, which beat and chased restlessly against the beach without. Having relinquished all hope of speedy escape or liberation, it only remained for the captive to school her heart to patience and resignation, qualities with which she had become familiar during her long years of imprisonment at the hands of her relative. She had much to cheer her now that she had not had then. There were hopes and dreams, innocent, girlish fancies now brooding in her heart to which until recently she had been a stranger. Once her life had been devoid of links to the outer world; now she thought of the one with whom she was connected by the nearest and tenderest of all ties, and lived over again the strange scenes of their

marriage and their unexpected confession of love at their last interview.

Dreaming of him she forgot the lapse of the hours. She watched the flush of the sunset on the white-crested waves, heard without listening the mournful cries of the sea-birds, and did not leave her window even when the cold grey twilight wrapped sea and land within its misty folds. She sat there gazing into the sombre and deepening darkness, with a thoughtful look in her dark eyes—a look that saw not the heavy night-shadows, but instead a sunny, happy home at Morepos, a home brightened with love and tenderness, a home shared with Sir Hugh!

She had nearly forgotten already that her ideal had been a Bayard. The warm, human love preferred her by her husband had almost become clearer in her eyes than all the perfections of the stately old heroes of whom she had ever heard.

And thus, thinking and dreaming, she did not notice how the night was deepening around her, until an involuntary shivering aroused her from her abstraction. No lights had been brought to her, and the room had become quite chilly, a cold wind sweeping in from the sea, and entering the crevices of the windows.

Cold, hungry and weary from the effects of the drug, under the influence of which she had been brought to her present abiding place, she disrobed herself in the darkness, and crept into her neat little bed. As if to compensate her in part for her sorrows, kind nature touched her eyelids with soft and gentle fingers, and speedily soothed her into sweet slumbers, which were beautified by visions of Sir Hugh, who seemed to plead anew for a love which was not this time denied.

In the morning she arose, refreshed and strengthened, and arranged her toilet with careful hands. The day was chilly, and without a dreary rain was falling, its drops patterning restlessly against the windows, making the most mournful of music. Above this minor moan of the rain was the bitter wail of the angry sea as it dashed upon the beach and then retreated, seeming like a wild beast chafing in its cage. Lady Chellis's evening attire was insufficient, and she sought additional warmth in her thick cloak, and nestled in the depths of her easy-chair.

At an early hour her frugal meal was brought, and, as soon as Mrs. Barrat had retired, she ate her allowance of bread, and then endeavoured to obtain refuge from her physical discomforts in day-dreams.

This day was a type of the two that followed. A dreary, drizzling, steady rain made the scene without painful to look upon, and the prison chamber was gloomy, cold, and unpleasant. The conspirators congratulated themselves that nature had assisted their schemes by making the house by the sea intolerable to their captive, and continually anticipated the announcement of her submission to their demands.

But no such announcement was made. Calm and resolute, Lady Chellis kept firm to her resolve not to yield. She walked backwards and forwards for hours together for warmth and exercise; she read the few books at her command; she beguiled her solitude with songs and ballads, which she sang softly and dreamily to herself; she ate the meagre allowance of bread afforded her; and never once complained, or showed signs of relenting in her resolve.

The fourth day of her captivity dawned clear and bright. The sunlight poured into the room in golden waves, transfiguring the crimson carpet and the pictures on the walls. A genial warmth pervaded every nook of the now pleasant room, and the captive found herself sufficiently warm without the protection of her cloak.

Trowing it aside, she seated herself by her window and looked out on the tranquil, smiling sea. The sunshine bathed her lace-covered shoulders in a pleasant glow, and

shone amidst her dark hair, nestling here and there in slender pencil-like rays, or in broad beams that turned to gold the trusses they touched. She was looking pale, as might have been expected, and her eyes had a sad and weary expression as she gazed longingly out upon the beach.

"If I were only free!" she murmured, her hand fluttering like a bird over the important paper she carried in her bosom. "Every moment I spend here may be a century of grief to Ilde Dara. Shall I yield for her sake?"

She could not immediately answer the question.

Continuing to look out, she soon observed two figures sauntering carelessly along the sands of the beach, apparently absorbed in conversation and in the enjoyment of the agreeable change in the weather.

She speedily recognised them as Mr. Wilmer and Mrs. Barrat.

They paced slowly over the shingle until they had gained a considerable distance from the dwelling, and they then disappeared from her view around a projecting and rocky point.

"If I could escape now!" breathed the captive.

The aspiration had been scarcely uttered when a key grated in her lock, the door opened, and Mrs. Garson entered, bearing a tray. She still wore her print sun-bonnet, but it was pushed away from her hard-featured face, and her eyes were full and keen in their glances.

She came in abruptly, placed the tray upon the table, and stood with her back against the door contemplating the captive.

"So you are crazy, are you?" she asked, brusquely.

Lady Chellis looked up with astonishment, scarcely knowing how to reply to this singular address.

"Do I look crazy?" she asked, quietly, after thinking a moment.

"Well, yes, I think you do, if you wish me to be frank," replied Mrs. Garson, surveying Lady Chellis, critically. "I own I had some doubts, but they are gone now. No sane person would wear a dress like that at this season of the year. Low neck and short sleeves! of course you are not in your right mind!"

"But I am in evening dress," said her ladyship. "I was stolen from my home at night!"

"I did not come here to argue, Miss Wilmer. I haven't time to discuss the subject with you at present. Your uncle and Mrs. Barrat have gone out to walk for an hour or so, and I've brought you a little breakfast that may taste better than dry bread."

Lady Chellis did not even look at the tray.

"I am sure you must have a kind heart," she said, earnestly, "or you wouldn't have brought me food. I am wickedly and unjustly imprisoned. I am no more insane than you are. Mr. Wilmer has brought me here to compel me to divide my fortune with him. For years he has oppressed and imprisoned me, expecting to inherit my property. Assist me to my freedom. Mrs. Gasson, and I will bless you as my greatest friend and benefactor!"

The woman shook her head slowly.

"Impossible!" she said, briefly.

"Do not say so. If you dread Mr. Wilmer's vengeance, I will protect you when once I am free. If you desire money, I will pay you more than Mr. Wilmer has agreed to do. I will double all that he has offered!"

Mrs. Garson's eyes sparkled greedily, but she still replied in the negative.

"You shall name your own reward then!" declared Adah, eagerly, coming forward.

"These diamonds I wear shall be yours as soon as you shall have conducted me outside your house."

The woman looked at the glittering gems covetously, and answered,—

"I can't do what you wish, miss. It's no use asking. In the first place, your guardian has a right to control you—"

"But I am my own mistress," interrupted Lady Chellis. "I am of age and married,"—and she displayed her fourth finger with its slender golden circlet—"see, there is my wedding-ring."

"I don't doubt your word, miss, or madam," was the response. "Though, if you are married, I can't see how Mr. Wilmer found the opportunity to steal you from your husband. I can't help you to escape. Mr. Wilmer holds me responsible for your safety in his absence. Besides, even if I were to let you go, he has horses here and would overtake you before you had gone a mile. I have a brother,"—and the woman's tones grew proud—"who is going to make a grand marriage soon. He would never forgive me if I should do anything to bring his name or mine into notoriety now. No, no, madam, I can't interfere in Mr. Wilmer's affairs. He pays me well and I take no risks. Plead to him instead of to me."

Her face grew harder as she concluded, and Adah knew that she might as well plead to a stone image as to this selfish, marble-hearted recluse.

"You had better eat what I have brought," said Mrs. Garson, beholding her despair unmoved. "You look pale and faint."

Lady Chellis shook her head. In her disappointment at making no impression upon Mrs. Garson she was no longer conscious of the pangs of hunger. Indeed, all thoughts of food inspired her with loathing.

She endeavoured again to soften the woman's heart by pleading, with some wild hope of finding a vulnerable point in it, but in vain. Then she appealed to her cupidity, offering her immense rewards, but Mrs. Garson was either incredulous of her ability to pay them, or doubtful of her sanity or good faith.

"Do you know that you are making yourself liable to punishment at the hands of the law by conspiring with Mr. Wilmer and Mrs. Barrat against my liberty?" demanded the prisoner, at last urged to threatening.

"I am not afraid," was the cool response. "I am no doctor to judge of your sanity. I simply furnish board for your friends, and no one can find fault with me for that. Since you won't have your breakfast I will take it away before your uncle returns. I can't stop longer, for I've got to catch my fish for dinner."

Her curiosity to see the prisoner amply satisfied, Mrs. Garson took the tray and withdrew, locking the door behind her. She had not for an instant entertained the idea of assisting Lady Chellis to escape, knowing as she did that Mr. Wilmer had horses for pursuit, and believing that she would eventually gain more by assisting her relative and the ex-guardian of the captive. She knew that they were intending to be married as soon as Lady Chellis should have furnished them with the money they demanded, and in the event of the marriage taking place she might hope for a very handsome reward for her services.

She returned to her kitchen, confirmed in her fidelity to her employer.

Lady Chellis resumed her seat at the window in time to witness the return of her relative and the ex-governess. They came along slowly and entered the house, but Mr. Wilmer went out again alone almost immediately and sauntered in the direction opposite to that he had recently taken.

The captive idly turned her gaze seaward. There were several small fishing-vessels in the dim distance, so far away that the white glimmer of their sails could alone be seen. But, suddenly, her glance rested upon one much nearer, which was approaching the shore with its broad sail set to catch the breeze, and which tacked first in one direction, then in another, yet all the while coming nearer to the land.

"The wind is driving out against it," said the captive, half aloud, interested in the unusual incident. "It would be a good wind to get out to sea in, but I can't see how the boat can come in against it."

She continued to watch the little craft, her vague interest increasing. It came on slowly for awhile, now bearing away as if intending to go out to sea again, and then standing in as well as the head wind would allow.

At length it came to anchor at a little distance from the shore, and the occupant of the boat appeared to be engaged in fishing.

Lady Chellis watched him eagerly for some minutes. Once or twice he seemed to cast a careless glance in the direction of the lone stone house, and the captive became inspired with the idea of appealing to him for aid.

But how was she to do it?

A scream for help would be wafted to him by the wind, but her enemies might also hear it. She raked her brain for some valuable suggestion, and length the came to her. Acting upon it, she sprang up with irresistible eagerness, caught up the small iron poker that lay in front of the paper-filled grate, and mounted a chair before the window.

A hasty glance up the beach assured her that her uncle was not within sight.

The heavy wire netting, as has been said, covered only the lower half of the window. The upper half consisted of moderate-sized panes of glass quite uncovered.

Into one of these panes Lady Chellis thrust the iron weapon, breaking the glass with a quick loud crash. She waited a moment, but as the noise appeared to have been unheard she proceeded to work again, tying her handkerchief to the end of the poker, and waving it through the aperture like a signal of distress.

For several moments her ingenuous stratagem appeared to be without effect. The fisherman seemed to be busy with his lines and sail, and did not look seawards. But as last he raised his eyes, noticed the waving signal, and stared at it for an instant. Then he turned away his head and resumed his work.

He had seen it. That was enough; and Lady Chellis, with a keen pang of disappointment at his apparent apathy, withdrew her signal before it could be seen by her enemies.

The bowsman continued to ply his trade in full view of the captive, but he did not look in her direction again.

"Some stupid boor!" thought Lady Chellis, her eyes filling with tears. "He does not understand my signal. If I could only speak to him and bribe him!"

The opportunity seemed likely to be afforded her. For, while she continued to look, Mrs. Garson's gaunt figure appeared on the beach, and her voice was heard calling to the fisherman inquiring as to his luck.

"Very good," was the reply, in a harsh, hoarse voice.

"Can't you come ashore?" called Mrs. Garson, her hand motioning the fisherman, by way of emphasis to her words. "I'll buy some fish of you, if you're not too dear!"

The fisherman nodded comprehendingly, pulled up his anchor, and sailed for the shore.

In a few minutes his little craft was drawn on to the beach, and he was engaged in displaying the fruits of his toil to Mrs. Garson.

Lady Chellis regarded him intently.

He was scarcely to be considered a favourable specimen of his class. His attire was worn, ragged, and patched. He stooped considerably, and his face was covered by a profuse growth of bushy whiskers of iron-grey hue. His hair was grey also, and fell around his red, hairy face and over his blue jacket like a thin fringe. There were heavy wrinkles across his forehead and his hands were as brown as berries.

As he had landed in front of Lady Chellis's window the captive could bear distinctly

every word that passed between him and Mrs. Garson.

He lifted out a long string of fine fish, which he displayed with evident pride, and submitted to the inspection of the woman.

"Yes, they are very good," she said, "and just caught. What do you charge for them?"

"Say threepence each, taum," said the fisherman, in a coarse, husky voice. "And cheap it is, mom, that your getting them."

Mrs. Garson appeared to coincide in this opinion, but deemed it necessary to cheapen the bargain, and haggled over the price for some time, the fisherman resisting her importunities obstinately, and permitting his eyes to rove about freely, and even to settle for an instant upon the window behind which the captive stood.

Whether he saw the slender, girlish figure, in its evening robes, and the proud sweet face, framed in its mass of dark, sunlit-hair, and the small, jewelled hand lifted prayerfully, could not be detected from the expression of his face. He glanced quickly away again, and looked up the coast.

The bargaining at length terminated, Mrs. Garson becoming the owner of the fish upon her own terms. Well satisfied, she drew from her pocket a small leather bag and counted out a sufficient number of pennies to compensate the fisherman, and said,—

"You're a stranger here, my good man, are you not? I don't remember your face!"

"Like 'nough you don't mum," was the response. "Tain't common for me to come so near the shore. I'm a sea-fisherman, mum, but my nets is out o' order, so I took to my lines."

Mrs. Garson nodded, and withdrew with her purchase to the kitchen on the opposite side of the house, where Mrs. Barrat sat awaiting her, in anticipation of a gossipy gossip.

Left to himself, the fisherman thrust his money into his pocket, drew from his boat a long net, and, seating himself upon the rocks, prepared to mend it with a wooden needle and some twine.

Lady Chellis stepped upon a chair, intending to speak to him through the aperture in the window. She had hardly taken up her position, when, in a hoarse, cracked voice, the fisherman began to sing to himself as he mended his net, and the captive was obliged to wait until he had finished his song.

It was an old ballad he sang, with quaint words and phrases, and the young bride listened to it half curiously and half impatiently. His voice was almost intolerable, and he bent over his net, as if with no thought beyond his task.

But almost imperceptibly the hoarse, cracked voice became soft and full and rich, and exquisitely modulated. The many tones, freighted with sweetness, stole up to the ears of the bewildered captive, singing a refrain of verse that bore no reference to the ballad.

"Loyalty is still the same
Whether it win or lose the game;
True as the dial to the sun,
Although it be not shined upon."

When he had finished he gave a keen, sharp glance up at Lady Chellis's window, observed her, pale and breathless, against the window-pane.

The young bride's soul was in a whirl of emotion. Her brain reeled and she caught heavily at the casement to support herself.

For the voice he had heard was the voice of Sir Hugh Chellis.

Memory, instinct, and love taught her at once that it was his voice and his alone. Joyful and bewildered, she struggled to command herself to say to speak to him.

"Buh!" the cry, in a trembling voice, through the broken pane. "Buh!"

He touched his worn cap with a grace never possessed by fishermen before, and put one hand to his beard as if he would pluck off the ugly disguise.

"Oh, Hugh, save me!" said the young wife, her voice sounding to him like the faint cry of a wounded bird.

He put his finger to his lip, glancing around him, and sang again. His voice had a tone of triumph and rejoicing in it now, and his words were a warning to her to be brave and cautious, and that she should be rescued.

"Be careful, Hugh," said the captive, sharing his joy, yet anxious for him. "Mr. Wilmer has gone up the shore. Don't let him see you."

The fisherman again bowed, gathered up his net, put it in the boat, and then, to the infinite dismay of Lady Chellis, walked quietly in the direction she had indicated as that which had been taken by her uncle.

She watched his stooping, ungainly figure until it had disappeared behind the rocks, almost doubting the evidence of her senses.

Sure that strange fisherman could not be Sir Hugh. He could not have traced her to her lonely prison after the precautions that had been taken by Mr. Wilmer. He could not have so thoroughly disguised himself. And yet it must be—it was—her husband!

The blessed conviction, coming with full force upon her mind, deprived her of all her strength, and she sat down deathly pale, her heart beating with great, strong throbs, like the quick, regular blows of a hammer.

Meanwhile the fisherman walked up the shore for a little distance, looking carefully about him as he went, and at length encountered Mr. Wilmer, who was resting in a niche among the rocks, idly enjoying the sun.

The latter looked up as the boatman stopped, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What do you want here?" he asked. "Don't you know, my good man, that you are intruding upon private grounds?"

"I want to see you, Mr. James Wilmer," responded the pretended fisherman, in quick, stern tones. "You see I know you in spite of your disguise. You have lead me a long and bare chase, but I've found you at last."

Mr. Wilmer was paralysed at this strange address and the manner of the new comer.

"Who—who are you?" he gasped.

The pretended fisherman took off his cap, and with one quick touch removed both wig and beard.

It was Sir Hugh Chellis's face that met the gaze of his astounded enemy—stern, glowing, and commanding.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The end of love is to have two made one In will and in affection.

Ben Jonson.

We'll live together like two wanton vines, Circling our souls and loves in one another; We'll spring together and we'll bear one fruit. One joy shall make us smile and one grief mourn, One age go with us, and one hour of death Shall close our eyes and one grave make us happy.

Bearmount and Fletcher.

THE astonished Mr. Wilmer trembled upon the rocks before Sir Hugh Chellis in abject terror, uttering his name in a hoarse and almost inaudible whisper. He had just been congratulating himself upon the success of his nefarious schemes, and promising himself the submission of his captive to the term exacted of her. Imagine, then, the black gulf of despair into which his soul was plunged by his sudden and unlooked-for appearance!

The young baronet followed up the impression he had made by producing a small silver mounted pistol, which he held unpleasantly near the head of the discomfited schemer.

Then he returned and looked seaward, beckoning with his hand.

A small fishing-boat, containing two men, had within the last half-hour been drawing near the shore, favoured by the wind, which had shifted, and it now crowded on every additional stitch of sail, standing in for the little cove where Sir Hugh was waiting.

In a few moments the boat had gained the land, and its two occupants, rough, honest-faced fishermen, sprang out and hurried towards the baronet.

Then Sir Hugh spoke again, with a quiet smile and air of authority that deepened the misery of the wretch before him.

"Mr. Wilmer," he said, "you have stolen my young bride from her home for purposes of vengeance, or because you wished to exact a heavy ransom for her. I have tracked you here, and now demand my wife at your hands!"

The two fishermen stood behind the baronet, and looked at Mr. Wilmer with glances so menacing that he shivered, and his teeth absolutely chattered.

"You see that I am not without friends," said Sir Hugh pointed to the two men, to one of whom the boat in which he had come, and the suit he wore, belonged. "These men will see justice done at any cost. So lead me to my wife at once!"

"Aye, lead us to her," said the elder of the two fishermen, in a gruff voice, "before or arter a duckin', as ye like!"

Mr. Wilmer turned an affrighted look from the baronet to his sturdy assistants. The former was stripping off the rough suit he wore over his ordinary attire, but his resolute face and flashing eyes were turned towards Adah's relative. He still held the glittering weapon in his hand. The fishermen were regarding the baffled schemer with lowering glances, as if they longed for a command to duck him in the neighbouring sea.

Mr. Wilmer's cowardly soul quailed within him.

"Don't let 'em duck me, Sir Hugh," he begged, in a sobbing voice, all his hopes of wealth and grandeur giving way before his fears of personal suffering. "I will take you to her."

He endeavoured to arise and lead the way to the dwelling, feeling that a refusal would only subject him to pain and indignity; but his limbs refused to support his weight.

With a groan, he fell back on the rocks.

"I reckon we'd better help him," said the fisherman who had spoken before. "Just lend hand, Jim."

The younger fisherman obeyed, stepping forward, intending to assist Mr. Wilmer to walk, but the latter, mistaking their intention, sprung up as if galvanised, protesting that he was quite able to proceed now, and imploring Sir Hugh to protect him.

"Lead on, then!" said the young baronet, sternly.

Mr. Wilmer hastened to obey.

The fisherman kept on either side of him, and Sir Hugh followed him closely. In this way they proceeded along the shore and towards the house.

Upon the beach in front of the dwelling Mrs. Garson and Mrs. Barrat were standing discussing the singular phenomenon involved in the appearance of the second boat, and speculating whether it had any connection with themselves or their captive.

Their discussion was terminated by the appearance of Mr. Wilmer closely guarded, and followed by Sir Hugh Caelius.

The ex-governess uttered a shriek and turned to flee, but her retreat was cut off by the younger fisherman. Mrs. Garson stood her ground and entered into noisy explanations, assertions of her ignorance, and innocence of all wrong, declaring that she had done nothing to infringe any law, and she defied anybody to prove that she had.

"Peace, woman!" said Sir Hugh, with a gesture, commanding silence. "Give me the key to Lady Chellis's room."

"My cousin—Mrs. Barrat has it!"

The ex-governess, after a frightened look at the silent and spiritless Mr. Wilmer relinquished the key without a word.

The young baronet gave a keen glance up at the wire-covered window, behind which he distinguished a slender figure, and a pale, lovely face, and then, with the lightness of a

boy, he bounded towards the house, entered the open door, and sprang up the stairs, three at a time.

The key, with some difficulty, caused by his eagerness, entered the lock, the bolt was turned, he opened the door and rushed across the threshold.

His young bride was still standing near the window, but her face was turned towards him. Her countenance was bright and sparkling with joy; her dark eyes were full of love and tenderness; her crimson lips quivered with the sweetest of emotions; and her loveliness was akin to that we imagine belong to the angels.

Sir Hugh paused and looked at the delicious vision as if he feared it would fade before his eyes. The snowy lace-covered shoulders from which the rose-coloured robe fell away in graceful folds, the long sweeping train, that lay upon the carpet, the jewels that flashed upon her column-like throat and rounded arms, all conspired to give her an unreal look.

But he paused only for a moment.

The expression of her face thrilled his heart with sudden hopefulness. He sprang forward, uttering only her name.

"Adah!"

"Hugh!" she answered, breaking the spell that had held her motionless as a statue.

"Hugh!" he cried, holding her in his arms impulsively, almost unconsciously, and she sprang into them, pillowing her head upon his breast.

There was a brief silence in which was heard only the beating of their hearts, and in which their souls seemed to grow together in an indissoluble bond. Sir Hugh, from the depths of his soul, wished that he might die then with those soft, perfumed tresses falling upon his breast, with that lovely head nestling in his bosom, and with those hands clinging to him as if they would never loosen their hold.

And Lady Chellis, in her inmost being, acknowledged to herself that the hero of her girlish dreams was before her—that he who had rescued her from her captivity, who had sought her everywhere and not rested until she was found, was dearer, nobler, and grander in her eyes than all the heroes o history or fable.

As she made this acknowledgment she withdrew herself from his embrace, her eyes drooping and her cheeks the colour of living flames.

"You are free, Adah," said Sir Hugh, retreating a step from her, and misusing her confusion for returning indifference.

"Your uncle can no longer harm you. Put on your bonnet and let us leave this place!"

Adah tied on her bonnet and cloak, and announced herself ready for instant departure.

Giving her his arm, the young baronet conducted her downstairs and to the beach, where the two sturdy fishermen awaited his return guarding the trio whom they choose to consider their prisoners.

A whispered word to the younger fisherman from Hugh, sent him to the table.

"Wilmer," then said the young baronet, sternly, "let this be the last attempt upon the liberty of Lady Chellis. For this time I can promise you immunity in her name but only for this once. Should you ever again lift your hand against her I will prosecute you to the extent of the law, without one thought of pity for your name or grey hairs. Understand that I mean even more than I say."

The ex-guardian cowered again before the look bestowed upon him by Sir Hugh, and faltered a protestation that he would never again molest his niece.

"Lady Chellis will be under my protection henceforth," said the baronet. "Whoever attempts to injure her will have first to deal with me. Remember that!"

The young bride leaned a little more heavily

upon her husband's arm, feeling a blissful sense of security in his promised protection.

There was a short pause during which no one spoke. Sir Hugh, holding his wife's arm proudly in his own, glanced now and then in the direction of the stable, from which presently issued the travelling-carriages and horses, perfectly equipped for the journey.

"Come, Adah," said her husband. "All is ready. We will go!"

Without another word, he led his young bride from the beach to the spot where the equipage had halted. The fishermen followed them, leaving Mr. Wilmer and his confederates to themselves. Arrived on the lawn, Sir Hugh introduced the two fishermen to Lady Onelia, and she shook hands with each, thanking them both in so sweet and gracious a way that it completely won their rough hearts. Sir Hugh then bestowed upon each a liberal compensation for their services, and, delighted with their morning's work, they went back to their boats.

The young baronet assisted his bride into the vehicle and mounted to the seat beside her. The double gates had been opened and they drove out into the road.

There they halted a moment while Adah looked back upon the drooping figure of Mr. Wilmer as he leaned on Mrs. Barrat. The young wife's face expressed only commiseration and forgiveness as she regarded him. He looked up and caught her pitying glance and felt that she remembered not against him any of the bitter wrongs with which he had clouded her young life.

In the present blissfulness pervading her soul Adah had no room for bitterness or anger.

"I shall never see him again, Hugh," she said, leaning back upon the cushions as her bridegroom drove on. "And so I have forgiven him everything."

"You are an angel," exclaimed Sir Hugh, with an adoring look at the lovely face beside him. "I read your wish so fervent him, else I should never have let him off so lightly. He would not find it well to molest you again."

"How did you discover me, Hugh?" asked Lady Chellis.

"It was not an easy task. I was at my inn in West Hoxton the morning after your disappearance, when I received a message from Aunt Dorothy, begging me to come at once to Moorepos. I went, and then learned of your mysterious disappearance. Captain Heddell was telegraphed for at once, but I did not wait for his coming. I believed, of course, that Mr. Wilmer had stolen you away, having seen him in the grove in the morning, as you know. I went to London immediately, traced Mr. Wilmer and Mrs. Barrat from your house to a dingy lodging-house, which they had left, it is said, for the Continent. Having seen him at Moorepos, I knew better than to believe that. I learned, accidentally, that Mr. Wilmer had purchased a pair of good horses and a travelling carriage, and I went back to West Hoxton to trace the vehicle."

"You would make a good detective," murmured Adah.

"Would I? It was difficult to trace the carriage, which travelled by night and along by roads, but I found a person who said he had seen such an equipage proceeding in this direction as he was going home at night from the ale-house. By dint of inquiry, I found others who had seen it at later periods. Finally, I tracked it to this vicinity. Not knowing how many men Mr. Wilmer might have at command, I disguised myself as a fisherman and began an inspection of the houses along the shore. I engaged two fishermen to attend me, and one of them gave me the information that he had seen a carriage arrive at the stone house three or four days ago, and so I knew at once where my bird was hidden. The rest you know."

He had totally ignored his fatigues and exhaustion, his fruitless wanderings in wrong directions, and his patient persistence in his

purpose during those dreary, rainy days, but Adah comprehended his generous self-forgetfulness and did him full justice in her heart.

"You have been very good to me, Sir Hugh," she said in a faltering voice. "I can never be sufficiently grateful."

He did not reply, perhaps not daring to trust his voice to speak. Her mention of gratitude chilled him with the belief that that sentiment alone had prompted her warm reception of him at the moment when he had opened her prison door. He felt hurt, pained, astonished.

There was a long silence between them. Lady Chellis, stealing a glance up at him, noticed that his face was pale and stern, as if he were struggling to command himself, and that his blue eyes had a set, fixed expression. She knew, by some subtle intuition, the cause of his changed looks, and her heart yearned towards him with pure and tender love.

"Adah," said the baronet, at last, in a low, husky voice, "I think you are scarcely safe at Moorepos, so long as your uncle is in existence. Your servants are powerless to protect you. As I promised you the other day, I shall go to the Continent and leave you in peace. But, as your friend and brother, let me entreat you to go to Hawk's Nest with my aunt. You will be safe there. Our family servants would watch over you as their beloved mistress, and I promise you upon my honour never to intrude upon you there. I should be happier, knowing that you were safe in the Nest that sheltered my boyhood."

"I—I cannot go."

"You think I will presume upon your concession, Adah," he said, sadly. "I will not. I feel that I am far removed from the ideal you have pictured to yourself. The ideal which would alone be a man worthy of you. I have been wild and wayward, a foolish protégé, Adah, but if I had only known you earlier I might perhaps have formed myself into a Baysard."

The young bride smiled at what she now deemed her folly.

"Don't Hugh," she said, blushing.

"But you will go to Hawk's Nest, Adah? Say you will."

"Not alone," she answered, timidly.

"Aunt Dorothy will be with you, and you can invite whom you will to accompany you."

"But, Hugh," said the young bride in a low voice, "I don't want any company but—but you."

The baronet started and looked at her. Her brilliant beauty was bathed in a soft, roseate flush, like the glow of early sunrise; her eyes, half raised, had a half-frightened expression, and her lips quivered with a tremulous smile.

What else he read there may be guessed at from his subsequent proceedings.

The quick blood leaped to his fair, boyish face, his countenance grew eager and impetuous, and in a transport of delight he clasped her in his arms, breathing words of endearment and epithets that thrilled her soul.

"You do love me then?" he whispered.

"Yes, Hugh," she answered, "yes my husband."

She spoke the last title in an almost insinuate whisper, and then nestled her head upon his shoulder like a tired child.

They rode on, over the pleasant country road, wrapped in happiness too great for words. The songs of the birds, the caressing breeze that brought to them the sweet breaths of the blossoming trees, and the soft sunbeams, were unheeded by both, for the sweetest of sunshine and mirth were in their hearts—sunshine that should never fade nor grow dim, and mirth which should never fail nor cease.

That ride back to Moorepos was a blissful experience that ever afterwards stood out in their lives as one of the holiest and tenderest of memories.

For an hour or two neither of the young lovers spoke, but gradually the silence became broken, and Adah told of her captivity and its incidents, and then both discussed the providence that had brought them together and the various occurrences of their mutual lives.

About noon they stopped at a little country inn to dine, and were served with the usual country delicacies by a nimble attendant. They did not linger after the repast, but set out again without delay. At the nearest town Sir Hugh telegraphed to Miss Dorothy and to Captain Heddell, informing him of his success in finding the lost bride, and bade them expect Lady Chellis and himself that evening.

It was about ten o'clock when the carriage passed through the village of West Hoxton, which looked strangely deserted, and advanced swiftly towards Moorepos. As they came near the pretty place they were greeted with a sight that surprised and pleased both.

The trees that embowered the house were hung with coloured Chinese lanterns all alight and gleaming like fiery eyes from the surrounding foliage. Every window blazed with radiance, and the front door was wide open, revealing the lighted hall. The long windows of the drawing-room were unbarred, and several persons could be seen within, prominent amongst whom was Miss Dorothy.

"What can all this mean?" said Lady Chellis, looking at the house and then at several groups moving about the lawn. "I cannot comprehend it!"

Before Sir Hugh, who was himself puzzled could offer any plausible explanation the wide gates were flung open for their admittance, and as they turned into the grounds they were received with resounding cheers.

"Welcome home, Lady Chellis, welcome home!" was the cry that rang through the air from a score of hearty throats. "Welcome to the Admiral's daughter!"

The baronet and his young bride bowed right and left to the moving figures and animated faces that had a grotesque look in the strange light, and drove quickly up to the verandah. Sir Hugh assisted his bride to alight, took her arm within his, and led her into the wide hall, where the servants received them with loud expressions of rejoicing.

"Do you feel too fatigued to enter the drawing room, Aish?" whispered her husband. "The neighbours have evidently heard of your rescue and wish to testify their respect and sympathy."

Lady Chellis was spared the trouble of an immediate decision. Nelly, her maid, with a joyous face, came forward and ushered her mistress into the reception-room opposite the drawing room, Sir Hugh accompanying his bride. Here brushes were brought into requisition outside covering laid aside, and the young bride in her evening dress, seemed attired for the occasion.

"On, my lady," whispered the faithful attendant, "will Sir Hugh stay here? He looks so happy and you too—"

Lady Chellis's smiles and blushes answered for her.

Sir Hugh offered her his arm, and leaning proudly upon it, the young bride was conducted into the drawing room, where Miss Dorothy stood waiting to receive them.

The winsome old fairy, as we have appropriately styled the elfish little spinster, was attired more elegantly than usual, and her starched ruff was wider, her stomacher more resplendent with jewels, her red boot-heels higher, and her staff more prominent. She came forward a few steps, the staff and the boot-heels making merry music, and then she stopped and surveyed the young couple with a pleased light in her bright black eyes, and a delighted expression upon her face.

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lovers that no pride or false fancies stood between them now.

They came up to her, bright, joyous and happy, and greeted her as children might greet after an absence a beloved mother. She stood up upon her toes to kiss the tall young baronet and his stately bride, and when Adah had withdrawn her lips from Miss Dorothy's cheek she noticed a tear glittering like a diamond upon her hand—a tear that must have fallen from Miss Dorothy's eyes.

Then followed introductions to the neighbouring gentry who thronged the room, and Sir Hugh proudly introduced his young bride to them all, pleased to notice though there were many fair women there Lady Chellis was peerless among them.

A few minutes put the young couple in possession of the cause of the evening's festivity. It seemed that Mr. Wilmer's nefarious conduct had all transpired, through the indignation of Captain Heddell, and that the country was ringing with the story of Adah's wrongs at the hands of her relative. Inquiries had been constantly made for news concerning the abducted bride, and the tenderest sympathy had been expressed, not only for Adah, but for her bereaved husband.

If anyone had suspected a mystery in Adah's marriage, the mystery was cleared up now, at once and for ever.

Captain Heddell, who was prominent among the guests, having officiated temporarily as host, came up to Adah with a beaming face and pressed her hand warmly, congratulating her heartily upon her happy relations with Sir Hugh.

"Your position in the county is now established, my dear, he whispered, at the first favourable opportunity. "Everyone knows now that you were never insane and that you are a happy wife. After all, this abduction has been all for the best."

Adah's heart echoed the words.

The guests did not protract their stay. They all knew that Lady Chellis must be greatly fatigued, and contented themselves with clasping her hands and offering their congratulations upon her marriage and escape from Mr. Wilmer. And then, having promised to call formally as soon as she should be recovered from her fatigues, they one and all withdrew, their example being followed by the villagers on the lawn.

The bride and bridegroom were then left to Miss Dorothy and Captain Heddell.

"Adah, did you find Hugh a Bayard?" asked the little punster, with a mischievous look. "If you have, and of course you would not have listened to him if he had not displayed heroic qualities, I shall have to alter that will of mine in his favour. What is the use of leaving one's money to buy French crinolines for the heathen when one has a Bayard in one's own family?"

Adah bore this raillery with a smile.

"The neighbours have all shown a most friendly spirit towards you Adah," said sober Captain Heddell. "The day after you were carried away Miss Dare, the daughter of Sir Allyn Dare, of Edencourt, came over here in the rain to call upon you, and was greatly disturbed on learning of your disappearance. She asked to see your maid, and after seeing her went away pale and troubled."

"Miss Dare!" exclaimed Lady Chellis, putting her hand involuntarily to her bosom where the hidden compact was secreted. "Is she married yet?"

"No, but she is to be in two or three days, they say to a former secretary of her grandfather—a most unsuitable match. The gentleman—I met him yesterday—is a coarse fat man, while she is as delicate and lovely as a fairy. Sir Allyn they say is seriously ill, and his daughter is with him constantly."

Adah felt relieved on learning that the marriage had not yet transpired.

"I wish it were not too late to go to Edencourt to-night," she said. "I must see Miss Dare in the morning at the earliest hour possible." (To be continued)

CONSTANCE CAREW.

CHAPTER XXI.

SEEN THROUGH A CRACK.

ON being left at the door of Mrs. Ralstone's house by Captain Carew, Edith Culver turns the handle and walks into the hall, quite anticipating that her employer will storm at her as she has done once or twice of late, and will end by ordering her to leave the house immediately.

Nothing happens but the unexpected. Instead of demanding of her governess how she dare leave the children to the care of the nurse, Mrs. Ralstone only says,

"Make haste, Miss Culver, we are just going to have dinner!"

Edith sighs.

The day of her deliverance from this worse than Egyptian bondage is still far distant, and the order of dismissal, which she would have gladly welcomed is carefully withheld.

It is with a sense of depression upon her countenance that Edith, having divested herself of her hat and scarf enters the dining-room, and takes her place at table, the two most unmanageable children having seats one on either side of her.

"Did'n't you want to turn in, Miss Culver?" asks Johnny Ralstone, an *enfant terrible* at her right.

The question is thrice repeated before Edith curtly answers.

"No."

"Why did you turn in, Miss Culver?" asks little Eliza, on her left.

No answer; but the child is not to be discouraged, and she repeats her question again and again, and again, until Edith is driven to give some sort of reply, and she says, sharply,— "I came because I knew it was dinner-time."

"Most people find their way home at dinner-time," here interposes Mrs. Ralstone, with a sneer.

"I could have dined elsewhere; but I thought you might want me," retorts Edith, Promptly.

"No doubt; but when I pay for the services of a person, I expect those services," says Mrs. Ralstone from the opposite end of the table.

To this Edith makes no reply. She would like to be able to say as soon as the meal is over, "I will take no more of your money;" but she knows Mrs. Ralstone well enough to be certain that this would not satisfy her, and that she would demand compensation for the abrupt termination of the engagement.

And this is more than Edith can pay at present, for her legacy has not yet reached her, may not do so for some months, she has learned to her chagrin, and although it will be possible to borrow money in anticipation, the sum bequeathed to her is not so large that she can afford to forestall it recklessly. So she bites her lip, and resolves to bear as patiently as she can, the position which is so painful irksome to her.

Mrs. Ralstone on her part is annoyed at having received notice to leave from her governess because she suits her. She is clever, well-educated, has made the children more obedient since she has been with them and can be trusted to take care of them when when they are left entirely in her charge. And this last consideration is a very important one, particularly as the lady likes to go out a great deal herself with acquaintances and friends, frequently not returning until late at night.

She is going out this evening, and soon after dinner is over, the remarks in her usual dictatorial tone.

"You must teach the children this afternoon, Miss Culver, and they are not to go out again to-day beyond the garden. I shall leave

them and nurse in your charge, as I am going on myself. If my brother comes in to his dinner you need not trouble yourself to entertain him, cook will get all he wants. I only hold you responsible for the children."

Edith bows in silence, but her curling lip and heightened colour show very plainly that she would not consider it an honour to look after the comforts of Mr. Leonard Catchbull, who, for some reason she does not understand, has recently taken up his quarters in his sister's house.

"His landlady is ill, so I told him he might as well have the spare room till she is better." Mrs. Ralstone had condescended to say in the hearing of her governess, and here the lawyer has nominally been since, though Edith has seen very little of him.

The rest of this eventful day passes slowly and wearily with Edith Culver in trying to instil knowledge into the minds of children who dislike learning, and she feels a sense of relief when bed-time for the children arrives, and her work for the day is done.

If she followed her inclination, she would go and see Constance Carew, but she cannot leave the house. Mrs. Ralstone having strictly enjoined her not to do so. There is, consequently, nothing more amusing for her to do than sit at the drawing-room window, and watch the people on the promenade between her and the sea.

The windows of the house look south, and, consequently, while she has a fine view of the mouth of the river and the headland on the other side, the sea-wall leading to Smugger's Cove is in an opposite direction and hidden from her view.

She knows, from an observation made by the nurse, that Mr. Catchbull had come in to his dinner, and had eaten it alone; and it is not until she sees him leave the house soon after seven o'clock that she ventures into the drawing room.

It will be remembered that the weather is changing, the wind blows cold, the tide is coming in, and the sea runs high, for it is on the same night that Constance Carew, accompanied by Jenifer, took that memorable walk to Novocome Park.

Edith's difficulty in giving her attention to her refractory pupils has been greatly increased this afternoon by the manner in which her thoughts have wandered off to the subject of her conversation with Captain Carew.

The matter has troubled her more than she can express, and she longs to see Constance and talk over with her the infamous charge that has been made against her.

"Poor Constance! Whoever would have supposed that she could get into such a scrape?" she moans. "It she had only possessed sufficient moral courage to say at the first 'that is my book, I lost it,' all this worry would have been avoided; and to think that Mr. Oatenbull should have acted as he has done. But that does not surprise me so much, for he and his sister are capable of any sharp practice if they are thwarted. He is a bad man, and she would have turned me out of the house to say if she had not thought the Carews would be glad to have me. I must be on my guard, or they will be bringing some trumped-up charge against me next."

This idea, which has only now occurred to her mind, alarms her, and she goes to her own room and carefully examines the contents of her two large boxes, packs into them everything belonging to herself that is not actually in use, and securely locks them.

In looking round the room to ascertain that she has not forgotten anything, she notices a large portmanteau, which is neither locked nor strapped, and that certainly does not belong to herself.

She fancied it was not here when she first came, but is not quite sure; she has had so little time to spend in her room, and has taken so little interest in everything about her, that she cannot positively remember.

In some doubt and perplexity she opens the

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portmaneau, and finds it absolutely empty. There is nothing whatever inside, neither is there any mark on the outside to show to whom the article belongs.

"I wish it were anywhere but in my room," she thinks. "I will ask one of the servants about it in the morning."

At this moment she is startled by a step at her door, followed by the announcement of a servant that her supper is ready.

"Supper!" exclaims Edith, "it can't be supper time, surely."

"It's nine o'clock, miss, and cook and me's going for a walk, if you've no objection" is the pert reply. "The misses won't be home till twelve o'clock for certain."

"I have no objection so far as I am concerned," replies the governess, nervously, "but I cannot give you leave to go."

"On! we know that; we don't ask you, miss. We shall take it" is the lofty retort; "but I thought I'd see if you'd want anything more till I came back."

"Thank you. I will come down at once," replies Edith; "but to whom does that empty portmaneau belong?"

"I don't know, miss," is the answer.

"Then I wish you would take it away," says the governess, and the servant with that carelessness with regard to the property of other people, characteristic of the British domestic of a certain type, takes the offending portmaneau and flings it carelessly into a small box room on the same landing, used only for the reception of superfluous luggage.

"There's nothing in it at any rate," she remarks when she has heard it fall, then she walks down stairs, followed by Edith, who is scarcely prepared, on reaching the dining-room, to find that nurse also is going out as well as the cook and housemaid.

"I really think you ought not to go, nurse," she is constrained to say. "the baby may wake, and if he does he will miss you."

"I don't care," is the answer. "I'm going with the others. The misses only thinks of her own pleasure, and never gives a thought to us," and off she does go, leaving Edith in charge of the house and six children.

Edith Colver is not naturally an amiable girl, but she is strongly conscientious, and she would be the last to leave the children as the more plausible nurse has done, or to abandon the house to its fate in the absence of the mistress, like the cook and housemaid.

So, as soon as they are gone, she carefully secures the doors and windows, and when she has eaten her simple supper, she takes a book and seats herself in the day nursery, from whence she can hear the children if they stir in their sleep.

For awhile she reads, then the book rests on her lap, and she indulges in pleasant dreams of freedom from the restraints of her present life, tinged with a hope that makes her heart flutter, and which raises such visions in her mind, that unconsciously her eyes close, and she drifts from day-dreams to that condition of dreamless sleep over which the will and the reason can exercise no control.

Suddenly she is startled out of her sleep by the prolonged ringing of a bell, and for a second or two she does not realize that she and the children are alone in the house, and that she will have to go down and open the door.

It is an unusual thing for the doors to be locked until the family and servants retire to rest; but Edith has lived in London where locks and bolts are in more constant use than in Devonshire.

The ringing of the bell continues, and Edith, though naturally brave feels a little nervous, being still only half awake, so she takes a lighted lamp in her hand and goes down to the side door from whence the demand for admittance comes.

For there are three ways of exit or entrance to this house; the front door, the side door, which is in the garden, and had once been the entrance to a surgery, and the back or kitchen door.

The bell which now continues to peal is from

the side or surgery entrance, and if Edith Colver did not feel so flurried by being aroused in this fashion, she would hesitate to open that door. As it is, however, she goes direct to it, draws back the bolts, reverses the lock, and the light from her candle falls upon the unsmiling pale and agitated countenance of Leonard Catchball.

He, dazzled with the light, does not recognize her, and she, startled by his appearance, steps back, while he mutters, savagely,—

"I hope you have kept me waiting long enough!" and without another word strides off to his own room.

Edith is more than half tempted to go on the outer sides of the door before she closes it, and makes her way at once to Captain Carew's house, where with his daughter she knows she would find shelter; but the recollection of those children upstairs, who may wake suddenly and scream themselves into fits before the nurse returns, makes her pause, and at this moment a child's cry sounds on her ear, and ends her hesitation.

So she closes the door and goes at once to the nursery, where one of the youngsters imagines himself to be fighting for some sugar candy and after some difficulty she soothes him off to sleep.

But how quiet the house seems! She cannot hear a sound, save the breathing of the children, and the howl of the wind, mingled with the grind and roar of the waves, as the storm increases, and the tide flows high.

The spare room which Mr. Catchball now occupies is on the same floor as the drawing-room, and immediately below the night nursery, and the consequence is that he can hear sounds from above, while Edith is in entire ignorance of his movements. She feels dreadfully nervous, and wishes intensely that the servants would return.

There was something in the lawyer's face as she opened the door to him, which filled her heart with terror.

He did not even glance at her, he supposed her to be one of the servants she knows, and in all probability he believes that the whole household is at home, and every moment she expects to hear him ring a bell or call for his sister; but he makes no sign, and the hands of the clock point to a quarter to twelve before there is a sound at the back door, which she recognises as the turning of a key, and she realises to her infinite relief that the three servants have returned.

Presently the nurse comes softly into the nursery, and seeing Edith's pale face asks, a little anxiously,—

"Is all right, miss?"

"I suppose so," is the weary answer. "Johnny has been awake, but has gone to sleep again, and Mr. Catchball came in at ten minutes past eleven. I had to open the side door for him."

"Does he know that we were all out, miss?" asks the woman in sudden alarm.

"I don't suppose he does," replies Edith. "I didn't speak to him, he walked past me, and the child was crying at the time; but I am going to bed. Good-night!"

"Good-night, miss, and thank you!"

This is a propitiatory tone intended to convey the request that the governess will no complain of her to the mistress.

Edith has no intention of doing anything of any kind, and she returns to her own room which is on the floor above; but before she seeks repose she adds a few words to her diary, then locks it away, just as Mrs. Rastone's knock can be heard at the front door.

The servants sleep downstairs, for the house is a large one, and only the governess sleeps upon this floor, on which there are two rooms besides the box-room already referred to.

Like most young girls Edith Colver sleeps soundly, the fatigues and worries of the day forgotten, but something happens to disturb her just as the dawn is breaking, and she wakes suddenly, sits up in bed and listens.

Her door is locked, so that no one could

enter the room, but as she listens she can distinctly hear the creaking of boards outside her door as though they were walked upon carefully by feet covered only by stockings or felt slippers.

There is no carpet on this landing, for it is at the top of the house, and Edith distinctly hears some person enter the little box-room close by; the same, it will be remembered, into which the empty portmaneau had been flung.

Who can it be? she wonders; not Mrs. Rastone for she would ring up every servant in the house to do her bidding, sooner than take the trouble to come here herself at this early hour of the morning, for anything she might require.

With a feeling of combined terror and curiosity she noiselessly slips out of bed upon the carpet, and goes to her own door, in which there is such a wide crack, that she usually keeps a cloak or dressing gown hanging over it.

This crack is covered now, but she removes the gown so slightly that anyone outside could never tell that her eyes have taken the place of the dark fold, and thus she stands and watches.

Every moment the daylight becomes more decided, and the landing is lighter than her room by reason of a skylight above.

Standing here in her night dress she is getting cold, when the door of the box-room noiselessly opens, and Leonard Catchball, only partially dressed, comes out slowly and cautiously as a thief might come, who feared lest anyone should observe his movement.

The grey dawn coming through the skylight upon his face, shows it to be ashy in its hue; his red eyes burn and glow with combined hate and terror, and as he glances at the closed door on the other side of which Edith is standing, the girl shivers, fearing that in some undefined way, he includes her in an unspoken malediction.

But he passes on and steals downstairs like one who has some dark secret to hide.

And Edith Colver, cold and terrified creeps back to her bed, thinking of what Captain Carew told her this morning about Catchball's attempt to have Constance arrested, and she feels assured that he is plotting, or has just perpetrated some fresh villainy of which she or her friend will be the victim.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DAY AFTER.

The sun is high in the heavens when Constance Carew again opens her eyes.

"What has happened?" she wonders. "What is there in the sunlight that makes her shudder?"

Even the wonder is vague in her mind, because she is only half awake, and she glances round the room with evident perplexity, until her eyes rest upon the anxious countenance of old Jenifer; then, like a flash of liquid light, the events of last night come back to her memory, and she starts up, asking fearfully,—

"What news, Jenifer? Is he—is he alive?"

"Yes, he isn't dead," replies the woman, slowly; "and though the doctors shake their heads over him, my belief is, he isn't going to die!"

"I pray Heaven that you may be right!" says Constance, fervently; "but have the other doctors arrived?"

"There's two from Exeter with him now," is the woman's answer; "and what they're saying or thinking I can't tell, but drink this cup of tea, dearie, and then get yourself dressed, while I go and find out what the doctors are doing."

Constance obeys. After that one burst of anxious excitement, she becomes calmer—almost unnaturally so, seeing that the life of the man she loves, is in peril—may even now be parting from its earthly tenement.

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So quickly does she get through her toilette, that she is ready to leave her room by the time Jenifer returns.

"I can't get no news!" says the woman, with a fine disregard for Liadley Marry. "The doctors have seen him, and gone away without doing nothing, and he's got two hospital nurses to wait on him, and nobody's to go a-nigh him, if you would."

"And I not there to say that I would do all that I could for him!" ejaculates Constance, wringing her hands helplessly.

"Twould have been of no use, dearie," says the woman, soothingly. "You couldn't do nursing like them who's made a study of it, you know, and the doctors have said, I'm told, that his life hangs on a thread. Nobody's to go a-nigh him, and there's a policeman on guard in the little room opposite the door, so you can't go a-nigh him."

"A policeman!" echoes Constance. "Why is he here?"

"To catch the man who tried to murder Sir Wilfred, I suppose!" is the answer. "May be they think he'll come back to finish his work."

The girl's lip quivers, but she makes no comment upon this subject, as she leaves the room to see her father.

She finds him in a little morning-room, that he is using instead of his own den, of which the policeman has taken possession.

Captain Carew is looking pale and worried, life has not gone smoothly with him of late; and only this morning, while all the anxiety with regard to Sir Wilfred's possible recovery was pending, he received a letter from Mr. Treleaven, written under the influence of jealousy no doubt, but insisting that his engagement to marry her shall be fulfilled immediately, and threatening to place the matter in the hands of her solicitor, if there is any further delay.

In justice to the lady it must be admitted that this angry and injudicious letter was written while she was smarting under the reported account of the transference of the Captain's mature affections from herself to Edith Calver, and before the scene at the gate of Kilworth House, which so nearly ended in a tragedy.

But no matter, under whatever circumstances it was written, it could not have reached Captain Carew's hands at a moment when he was less inclined to tolerate anything like threats or compulsion, and the language he used after reading it was decidedly unparliamentary as he crumpled the letter in his hand and thrust it into his pocket.

This had happened a couple of hours before his daughter made her appearance, but he is still smarting under the irritation caused by it, and his mind is still too much engrossed by this matter, for him to be able to give his undivided attention to her affairs.

He observes that she looks very pale, he had thought it a little strange that Sir Wilfred should have been at his house so late on the previous evening, and he surmises that the Baronet and his daughter have plighted their troth, but under present circumstances he deems it wise to ask no questions upon this point.

"Glad you slept well, my dear," he says, kissing the girl's pale forehead. "I sent Jenifer for the keys with orders not to disturb you, but you can have them again now. Sad business this about Sir Wilfred Marshall, isn't it?"

"Yes; how is he, father?" asks Constance, her eyes dilating with anxiety.

"Impossible to say," is the reply. "The doctors won't give any opinion; they haven't been able to find the bullet. A great gun in the medical profession is coming down from London, and he and the other doctors will have a consultation, if Sir Wilfred is alive when he gets here."

The girl swings her hands in silence; then, after a pause, she asks,—

"Can I see him?"

"Well, no!" says her father, slowly.

"Your presence might disturb him, and he is in charge of the nurses."

"My presence could not give him pain," Constance says, slowly, and with evident effort, "for last night I promised to be his wife!"

"Ooh! that's what brought him here, wan it!" exclaims the Captain, in a tone expressive of anything but pleasure. "I must say you women have a faculty for doing the right thing just at the wrong time. Have you forgotten the visitor we had yesterday morning, and the wicked charge which that scoundrel Catchball made against you?"

"No, I have not forgotten it," replies Constance, "and I told Sir Wilfred about it, but he knows how false the accusation is."

"All the same, I wish it hadn't been made," grumbles Captain Carew. "It has driven me into a corner in more ways than one."

He crushes the letter that is in his pocket as he speaks, but his daughter is unconscious of the channel into which his thoughts have run, and she asks, suddenly,—

"Do you know who shot Sir Wilfred?"

"I can't say positively that I do," replies her father, cautiously.

"But you said last night that you heard voices before the shot was fired," persists the girl.

"Yes, but one can't swear to a voice, particularly if one doesn't know it very well," he retorts evasively; and before his daughter can press the matter further, Myra Barlow, in her most light and airy manner, comes into the room and exclaims,—

"Oh, Miss Carew, I am so glad to see you are better! I have had a wretched night myself, thinking of poor, dear Sir Wilfred."

Constance makes no response, but turns away, feeling that this girl's very presence jars upon her nerves, and Captain Carew asks, coldly,—

"By what train do you leave, Miss Myra?"

"Train!" echoes the girl. "I can't possibly travel to-day, and I don't like to take a long journey alone. Besides, there is no hurry, you've plenty of rooms for the nurses, and I didn't mean what I said last night!"

She begins to pour and to weep. It will upset all her pretty schemes and plots to have to leave Teignmouth just now, and she determines to gain some slight delay at any price, and when Captain Carew says, gravely,—

"With a wounded, perhaps a dying man in the house, we cannot have visitors. But you are young to travel alone, and I will write to your aunt to fetch you."

"I will write," cries Myra, quickly, "and she will get the letter to-morrow. I'll go and do it at once," and she leaves the room, muttering to herself.

"I'm so awfully vexed; they might have let me stay. But I won't go back to school again if I can help it," and presently, instead of writing her letter, she sallies forth for a walk on the beach.

Here she expects to meet James Treleaven, but he is not to be seen, and she walks up and down listlessly, her active, unscrupulous little brain trying to devise some plan by which she can avoid returning to London, and to the hateful routine of school.

She has wandered about for nearly half-an-hour, when she sees Edith Calver come out of the house, at present tenanted by Mrs. Ristone.

The governess is accompanied by a troop of noisy children and a nurse, the latter carrying a baby.

"Miss Calver does look washed out this morning, and as plain as plain can be," reflects Myra, with malicious satisfaction. "I wish Mr. Balderson could see her now; he'd never again call her handsome. I suppose she has been teaching those horrid children all the morning; I wouldn't be in her shoes for anything she could give me."

Myra has momentarily forgotten the legacy to which Edith has become entitled, but though she despises the governess, and she is well aware that the latter dislikes her, for

want of a more congenial companion, she approaches the noisy group and after the first salutation is over, remarks,—

"You're looking awfully needy this morning, Miss Calver."

"Yes, I had a bad night, and the children have been unusually trying this morning" is the answer; "but I am beginning to feel better now I am in the fresh air. How is Constance Carew?"

"She looked like a ghost half-an-hour ago," replies Myra. "You know what happened last night?"

"No, I know nothing," says Edith, startled by the girl's tone and manner.

"You don't know that Sir Wilfred Marshall was shot when he was leaving Kilworth House, about eleven o'clock last night, and that he is now in our house in such a critical condition, that the doctors can't hold out much hope that he will survive?" asks Myra, incredulously.

"No; how should I know it with no one to tell me," cries Edith; "but tell me more. How did it all happen? Who fired the shot?"

"Ah! that's just what the police want to know," rejoins Myra; and then, rather pleased with the importance of being the first to tell what she herself witnessed, she gives a long and detailed account of what she supposes to have taken place the previous night.

"It was just eleven o'clock when the shot was fired," she concludes. "Captain Carew says he heard a clock striking eleven at the very moment.

"What a fearful thing!" ejaculates Edith; "and you say they have two nurses in the house?"

"Yes, of course; he can't be moved in his present condition," returns Myra.

"Of course not," assents Edith.

Then she asks, suddenly,—

"How much longer are you going to stay there?"

"I don't know," replies the younger girl, taken aback by the direct question.

"I ask, because Captain Carew invited me to come and stay with his daughter," explains Edith, with the unpleasant frankness that has frequently been more than a match for Myra's impertinence, "and when I come, as Constance and I are friends, you will feel more out in the cold than ever."

"Oh, they can't do with visitors now, Captain Carew told me so just now," cries Myra, quickly; forgetting, in her anxiety to put Edith off, that she is betraying herself.

"Then you have been told to go," cries Edith, quickly. "That must be very awkward for you!"

"It is," asserts Myra, dropping her grand airs as coolly as she might have dropped a cloak. "I haven't heard from Aunt Carrie for a long time, but I am going to write to her to-day. Aunt Mary is quite taken up with the cousin at Badleigh Salterton, and they don't like me and I don't like them. The school ought to open next week, but I haven't heard anything about it."

"I have heard a great deal," responds Edith, dryly; "but Ishan't tell you what it is; write to your Aunt Carrie, and when her letter comes it will surprise you."

"You make me quite nervous," cries Myra, eagerly. "Will the news be good or bad?"

"I don't think you will consider it good news," is the reply; "but I shall say nothing more about it. I wish you would tell Constance that I shall be sure to come up to her some time to-day."

At this moment Myra perceives James Treleaven, evidently waiting for her, and with a brief adieu to Edith she goes to meet him.

But what she has told Edith has excited the latter so much that she would return to Mrs. Ristone to say she must go at once to see Miss Carew, if she did not know that her employer is out and will not return home till dinner time.

The walk with the children has to be taken, therefore, as though nothing unusual had



[AS EDITH IS WALKING DOWN THE ROAD, A MAN ACCOSTS HER, AND ASKS, "IS SIR WILFRED ALIVE STILL?"]

occurred, and on getting back to the house she finds a letter which has come for her by the mid-day post.

In an instant she recognises the handwriting as that of her school friend, Margaret Saunderson, and she tears it open, anxiously wondering if the missing bridegroom elect has been found.

But the letter is brief as words can make it.

"I shall arrive in Teignmouth by the train leaving Paddington at one p.m. Engage rooms for me, and meet me at the station. Stay with me if you can."

This is all, except the heading and the signature, and Edith is quick witted enough to understand that although Alfred Rendlemere has not been found, it is confidently believed by the woman who loves him, that she is on his track.

There is no time to be lost, however. Go out this afternoon she must, and she will, even though her determination should close Mrs. Ralston's door against her for ever. So leaving the children in charge of nurse, who is much more obliging to day than usual, she goes up to her own room to change her dress and prepare her things to be ready for removal.

She has but little time to spare, but the temptation is great upon her as she stands attired in her new walking dress at the door of her own room to go into the little box-room and discover if possible what Mr. Leonard Catchbull came to seek or to hide in the very small hours of the morning.

A glance at her new frock and the thought of the dust that will be on the boxes makes her hesitate, and the bell ringing for the mid-day dinner decides the matter. There is no time at present at any rate, and she feels that it is more than probable that no future opportunity will present itself.

In this she is mistaken, however. Mrs. Ralston, who has just come in, has heard during her temporary absence a highly-

coloured version of the attempt to murder Sir Wilfred Marshall, and her mind is full of the matter. She is ready with her sympathy, and is quite willing that her governess should go to the house in which the Baronet lies and bring her back the latest details.

Of this visit I need give no account beyond stating that at her friend's request Edith sits down to write a letter to Eric Balderson.

"Tell him what has happened, and tell him I want him," says Constance, with the unconscious selfishness of grief. "Entreat him to come as soon as possible."

"Will you dictate the letter?" asks Edith, with a lump in her throat, while she struggles hard to keep the jealous pain that wrings her heart from showing itself in her eyes or voice.

Even in her own grief Constance understands something of what her companion suffers, and she answers, wearily,—

"No, write to him in your own words. Tell him I want his advice and help; tell him I rely upon him as if he were my brother, and you may tell him also that Sir Wilfred and I are engaged to be married."

For the first time since the shot was fired her fortitude gives way. As she says this she weeps and sobs so unrestrainedly that Edith becomes alarmed and tries to soothe her, asking at length,—

"But do you love Sir Wilfred?"

"Love him!" repeats Constance, amazed at the question. "Yes, I love him so well that I shall die if he dies. But I must see Mr. Balderson. Now Sir Wilfred is helpless he must act for both of us."

"He shall," cried Edith, with a blissful feeling of relief, as though a load had been taken from her heart. "But don't anticipate the worst, Constance. You know the doctors say there is a chance for the better?"

"Yes, I know," is the reply; "and I am thankful for it. But don't let Margaret Saunderson come near me till I have seen

Mr. Balderson, and don't let her leave Teignmouth without my seeing her."

"I won't," is the wondering reply.

And thus the letter is written, and Edith takes it with her to post on her way to the railway station.

But after leaving Kilworthy House, just as she is walking down the road, a man accosts her, and asks,—

"Is Sir Wilfred alive still?"

"Yes, he is alive," she answers, startled by the contrast between the man's speech and his attire and apparent position in life.

For his voice is the voice of a gentleman; his dress is that of a labourer.

"Is he better? Is he likely to recover?" is the next anxious question.

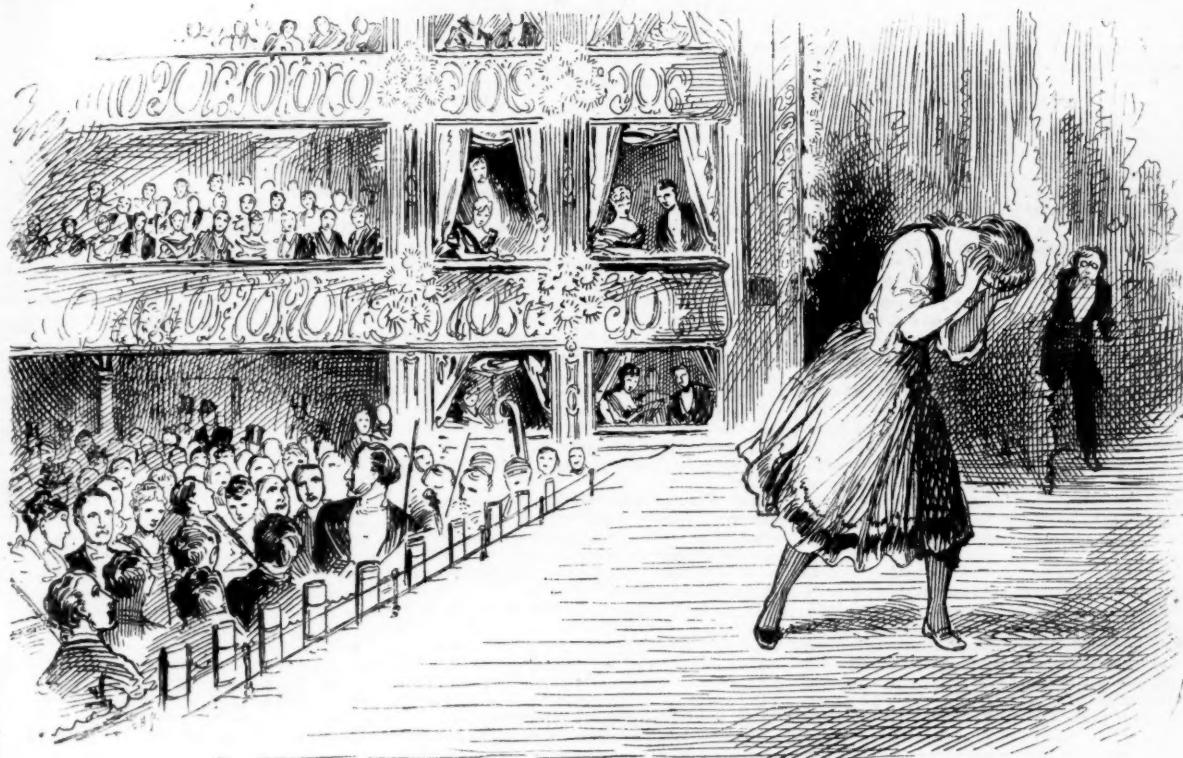
"He is a trifle better," replies the young lady, looking intently at her questioner's white, worn face and big, black eyes. "But the doctors do not yet say that he will recover."

"Thank you, miss!"

This is in such an evidently assumed voice that Edith feels convinced that the man is not what he seems; but her mind is too preoccupied with thinking of the troubles of her friends and anticipating seeing Eric Balderson again to concern herself much about an incongruous-looking labourer, and she hastens on to the post-office and thence to the railway station, where she arrives just as the train from London is due.

(To be continued.)

On an average one hundred articles are received at the Lost Property Office at Whitehall every day from cabmen whose honesty is sufficiently active to induce them to comply with that stipulation in their licence which requires them to convey to the nearest police-station any stray goods or chattels found in their vehicles.



[WITH A LOW, WILD CRY ARLEY FLED TO THE FARTHERMOST END OF THE STAGE!]

NOVELETTE.]

RAMINGO'S PROTÉGÉE

CHAPTER I.

SUDDENLY a divine voice clef the stillness of the summer air; in an instant all the loiterers in the Royal George were on the alert; heat and ennui alike were forgotten, and all eyes were turned towards the road. A little buzz of surprise followed, for the singer was but a child of twelve, poorly dressed, yet with a face of such beauty that a first look at it could never be the last.

It was an old and half-forgotten song she sang; the words were poor, but wedged to a deliciously simple and pure melody, and when the first murmur of astonishment had passed every soul there composed himself or herself, to listen.

Even the great *maestro*, Signor Ramingo thrust his little grizzled head from an upper window and never moved his eyes from the sweet face of the young singer, whose colour came and went fitfully as she met the fixed regard of so many great folks.

Two young ladies, who were seated close by the laurel hedge, gave her undivided attention. The elder of the two said, pitifully,—

"Poor child! how cruel to think that all her beauty and her talent will be wasted! What a horrible life to lead!"

"Oh!" retorted the other. "I daresay she is quite content with her lot, and would be wretched if compelled to lead a respectable existence—those sort of people hate restraint."

"But she looks so superior to the usual street singer, Geraldine."

"And her people are cunning enough to know that, and make a market of it," answered Miss Kooly's, tossing her blonde

head. "Really, Mona, in some things you are as unsophisticated as a baby! Oh, she is going to sing again, and of all things that dolorous ballad, 'Auld Robin Gray!'"

"It is an exquisite air, and I like the words immensely," said the girl addressed as Mona. "Poor little soul, I wonder what her story is? Child," as the voice died away, "come here," and as the girl obeyed, the speaker drew out her purse and tendered her sixpence. Geraldine gave nothing, indeed, her face wore an expression of superb indifference as she scanned the young creature curiously. There were a great many people in the grounds, and most of them were generously disposed, so that the girl made quite a harvest there, but she seemed glad to hurry away, and Mona saw that the beautiful eyes wore a shamed expression, as though the mere acceptance of alms was hateful to the young heart. She wished then she had spoken some kindly, comforting word. Just then her companion touched her arm,—

"Look at Signor Ramingo; he is rushing away hatless and excited! What on earth is he going to do? What an ugly little wretch he is, and folks say that he is an awful miser—Why, Mona! he is following that girl! What does he want with her—there now that horrid curve in the road hides them both, and it is far too hot to get up and investigate."

"And the Signor's movements cannot concern us," answered the other girl.

Meanwhile the Italian went flying down the road, his grizzled hair blown wildly about his swarthy face, his eyes bright with excitement, and when he came within an easy distance of the girl, he cried,

"Stop, I must speak with you!"

She turned, startled and a little afraid of the *bizarre* figure; but she waited for him to join her, and to recover his lost breath. When he had done this, he asked quickly, and with hardly any suspicion of an accent,

"You child! what is your name? What are your people? Where do you live?"

Her frightened eyes met his, and, in a voice all shaken and faint, she said,—

"Sir! I have done nothing wrong; please to let me go."

He laughed a trifle impatiently.

"Ah, do I look then so ferocious! I am not going to hurt you; but I want truthful answers to my questions—perhaps I mean to be your friend, who knows? And now, your name if you please?"

"Arley Wanteford, sir," with a very nervous glance at him.

"Good name that; what are your people—no lies. I like the truth!"

The child's face flushed.

"I have no people. My father died six months ago—my mother was buried yesterday;" and then the poor little mouth quivered, and the tears began to fall.

The Signor stood silent, waiting for her to recover her composure, and half-doubtful of the truth of her story.

With a sudden forcible expression of self, wonderful in one so young, she said, shortly,—

"My father used to sing at music-halls, and mother gave lessons until she was too ill—she taught me to sing—but we had bad luck, and when she died the parish had to bury her; we had not any money left."

"Then, why did you not go to the workhouse?"

The child's face flamed crimson.

"We are not paupers," she answered, with a slight uplifting of her head, "and Mrs. Hoban, our landlady, said if I could earn enough money to keep me I might sleep with her Jenny—so I came out to-day for the first time to try and earn my living. It is all so hateful, but mother always said she would rather see me dead than know I had got to go to the workhouse!" and then she covered her face with her slender hands and wept as though her very heart would break.

"Sit down on this bank beside me," said Signor Ramingo, "and listen to me. While you cry I cannot talk—there, that is better. Now, will you take me to your landlady that I may see if all you say is true? And if I find it is so I will take you away to live with me, and have you educated as a lady. But I cannot do this without payment of some sort. You will have to study very hard, and when you are old enough, I shall present you to the public, and all your earnings must be mine until you are of age."

Arley looked at him doubtfully a moment, then seeing he was in earnest, she lifted one of his supple, swarthy hands, and kissed it gratefully.

To the homeless, friendless child, he seemed a veritable angel, and in her young heart she was already wondering how she could serve and repay him.

This little exhibition of feeling apparently pleased the *maestro*, for he literally beamed upon her. Then releasing his hand from her timid hold, he said,—

"Give me your address. I will call on your landlady to-night, and in the meanwhile do not use your voice until I give you permission. Remember that in all probability it belongs to me."

He watched her as she went, and when he could see her no more returned to the hotel in a very self-sacrificing mood.

"It's an experiment," he thought, "and it ought to be a success. If she keeps her beauty and her voice fulfils its promise, she will amply repay me for any expense I may incur. A good name, too—Arley Wanteford—rather curious, sure to catch the public by its very singularity. Wanteford! Ah, yes, I remember there was a clever fellow of that name. Her father no doubt. Alessandro Ramingo, I congratulate you upon your foresight!"

He gave no explanation of his hurried exit to any of his fellow boarders. He was by no means a communicative man, and when he disappeared after dinner no one thought of commenting upon it.

"The true genius is always erratic," said Mona's benefactor, Lord Biscombe, "and Ramingo is undoubtedly a genius in his own particular line. He could almost draw music out of a lamp-post; but, for all that, I dislike him."

The Italian went straight to the address given by Arley, and in every particular he found her story true.

Mrs. Hoban declared that she had never had so lady-like a lodger as Mrs. Wanteford; but that she had been in terribly straitened circumstances owing to her long illness, following immediately on her husband's death.

"I'd willingly keep the child," she added, with tears in her eyes. "She's a good little thing, and that clever as never was, but I'm a poor woman myself with a lot of children to do for, and a lazy husband, so what can I do, sir? If you will help her to good service, sir, I'm sure I'd be most thankful."

Ramingo glanced round the poorly furnished room. It was excessively clean, and its few belongings were tastefully arranged. Evidently Mrs. Hoban was a good housewife, and kind-hearted, too, as her pity for Arley showed. But the *maestro* thought little of these things, as he said,—

"I do not wish to place the child in service, I intend to adopt her; but as I am staying here for several days longer I wish you to take charge of her until the time is ripe to take her away. I do not desire that in the future she should be reminded of her humble origin, so you will please keep her secluded as far as possible until we leave Portaferry. You shall be well paid for your trouble; and I think you had better get her other clothing. She did not strike me as being well-dressed."

"You'd like her to have mourning, sir, seeing her mother's but just dead?"

" Mourning by all means," hastily, "there can't be any special tests required in selecting that. Here are five sovereigns. If you want more you can apply to Signor Ramingo,

at the Royal George, and see that you bring the child to the station on Thursday morning next at eleven-thirty. Thanks, no, I do not wish to see her; but you may tell her of our arrangements;" and with that he bade her a curt good-evening, and went his way.

"He's acting generous," the woman muttered to herself, as she looked after him; "but I don't quite like his looks or his manner; but then he's a foreigner, and that accounts for all; and it'll be a good thing for Arley, it would just about break her mother's heart to know the girl was tramping the country singing. She's different to us, bless the child, and I'm glad to think she'll be made a lady of."

But all the same, honest Mrs. Hoban made her purchases in a very laudatory way. She loved the pale, pretty orphan, and would fain have kept her with her had means allowed.

She would not even trust to her own taste in selecting necessary garments, but having entered a middle-class shop left everything to the young lady presiding at the counter.

She was a pleasant, kindly girl, and took a real interest in Mrs. Hoban and her charge, so that when they appeared at the station on Thursday Arley was tastefully and simply dressed.

The Signor was waiting for them and looked agreeably surprised at his *protégé*'s appearance. He even beamed benevolently upon her when she said, in a shaken voice,—

"I want to thank you, sir, but I can't. You are too good!"

It annoyed him a little that she so clung to and wept with Mrs. Hoban, that she so passionately entreated the good woman to "keep mother's grave free from weeds;" but he reflected that she was young yet, and in a little while fresh faces and fresh scenes would teach her forgetfulness of the past.

He was going to mould her nature after his own fashion, she was to be successful, and as a mine of gold to him. She should repay him for all his present and future expenditure, and he smiled as he thought what a harvest he would reap.

He took her at once to his town house, a dingy little place in a fashionable square, and there her course of study began.

It was no part of the *maestro*'s plan that she should attend school. Arley's voice must not be Chapmaned (she was to burst like a meteor on the public when the time was ripe), so he engaged a daily governess of undoubted ability, and himself superintended her musical studies.

She was quick to learn, and the little Italian was delighted with the progress she made. Her voice grew in power and sweetness, and in her passionate gratitude for all his goodness to her, Arley fairly worshipped him.

Then, too, her beauty increased as the months and years rolled by; a faint bloom tinged the clear paleness of her cheeks, a great light grew in the dusky grey eyes, which, under their heavy fringes looked almost black, and the sweet mouth was ever ready to smile.

She worked early and late, she was so eager to pay her debt, so eager to show Ramingo how grateful she was.

She wished she could have added "how much she loved him" but truth was inherent with her, and she felt ashamed that she had so little affection for the man who had done so much for her.

At last she reached her seventeenth birthday, and then the Signor called her into his own private room.

"Arley," he said, "I believe you are seventeen to-day. Is it time we made a stark. Sit down and listen to me. I think you will acknowledge that I have done everything a man could do to forward your interests. Is it not so?"

"You have been most good to me," she answered. "I can never repay you."

"That remains to be seen. I think it is high time we dismissed Miss Castle, you know as much as she can teach you. For the next six months I wish you to study music

exclusively. After that I will secure an engagement for you, and I hope it will be your training. For the rest, Arley, I want you to sign a document to the effect that all your earnings from the time of your appearance until your twenty-third year shall be mine. I, on my part, agreeing to supply you with all things necessary for your maintenance and adornment. Without my permission, you bind yourself to remain single until the time of our bond expires. I do not think the terms hard—"

"Nor I," she broke in, quickly. "I will do all that you wish. Where is the paper?"

"Stop," said Ramingo. "I believe, as a minor, your word would not be binding. How am I to know you will not play me false?"

She stretched out her limm, slender hands to him.

"By the love I bore my mother," she answered, "and for the honour of my father's name I will be true to you in word and deed. Will not you believe so much of me?"

The glistening dark eyes met his, and even he was impressed by their innocence and truth.

"I believe you," he said. "Here is the paper."

It was a legal-looking document, legally drawn up, and when she had written her name he called in two servants as witnesses; and Arley stood by with an aching heart, because it seemed to the sensitive girl her self-constituted guardian could not trust her mere word—and oh! she was so hungry for love!

Ramingo had denied her nothing save this; but despite her gratitude to him and her intense appreciation of his genius she was often chilled, sometimes repelled, by his manner.

She used to remember the dear old days, before poverty came to them, when she and her parents lived together in harmony and comfort; and then sometimes (not often, for she was strong) the tears would come, and her heart would almost break within her as she remembered the two grass-grown graves so far apart which contained all that she had ever loved.

"Oh, how I want you, dear father, dear mother!" she would say, and all the gladness would leave her beautiful young face.

CHAPTER II.

"I RECOGNISED her the moment she came upon the orchestra," said Geraldine Koily, with a turn of her stately head. "She is the girl who sang to us at Portaferry, how many years ago I am afraid to say. I was only eighteen then, Mona, now I confess to twenty-four. Isn't it awful? Old Ramingo knew what he was about when he rushed out of the grounds after that little wif. He will make a fortune by her; Chandos was fairly fascinated by her."

"She is very beautiful," Lady Biscombe answered, half dreamily, "and she looks good; then her voice is divine enough to lure the heart of any man's breast. I think I never heard anything like it."

"That is just what Chandos says. Some women would be jealous, but I am not. Yet you know I cannot sing a note in tune. If the truth must be told in all its nakedness I even dislike music!"

"What a horrible confession! And really, Geraldine, for Mr. Burgoyne's sake you should try to cultivate the taste. He is no mean performer himself."

The girl opened her blue eyes wide.

"Why should I affect to like all that he likes? Really, Mona, marriage has not cured you of your romantic fancies."

"There is no reason why it should. Ulric is as much my lover now as on the day he asked me to be his wife. Geraldine, when are you going to make Mr. Chandos Burgoyne happy by giving him yourself?"

Miss Knollys shrugged her shoulders.

"He is very nice, and of course I am fond of him, but you do not suppose for an instant that I am going to relinquish my prospective fortune because of him? He is bound to me, and as an honourable man, cannot escape. But you know how strongly Aunt Emma advocates single blessedness. If I married Chandos during her lifetime I should never see one shilling of her fortune, and I hate to think of others inheriting it. Chandos must be patient. Aunt Emma cannot last much longer, and then I can please myself."

The utter selfishness and heartlessness of her remark disgusted Lady Biscombe. Rising, she shook out the folds of her pretty tea-gown, saying, coldly,—

"It is time we dressed for the Pooley's reception. Miss Wanteford will be there, and I should be sorry to miss this chance of meeting her privately."

"Chandos will be mad with delight," said Miss Knollys, utterly ignoring the change in her hostess's manner. "He dotes on genius;" and then each went to her separate room, Lady Biscombe thinking what a misfortune it was for Chandos Burgoyne to be linked to such a woman as Geraldine.

He had loved her passionately—once—six years ago, when he had believed her good and kind as she was fair. Nobly born, heir presumptive to an earldom, he was still far from being a wealthy man, and his fiancee adored wealth.

She was incapable of love, but she "liked" her handsome suitor, and was quite ready to marry him until her father died, leaving her to the care of a maiden aunt, of great wealth, who abhorred love and lovers, and utterly refused to receive young Burgoyne, promising her niece that if she remained single during her life, she would will all her fortune to her.

So Geraldine put off her marriage, first on one plausible pretext and then another, until her lover's patience was wearied out, and as he gradually learned her nature awoke his passion died slowly out, and nothing but a sense of honour kept him faithful to his bond.

Geraldine would not marry him, neither would she release him, and thinking of these things Lady Biscombe sighed. She wished a happier fate for her favourite than marriage with Geraldine Knollys.

A little later the latter sailed into her room, beautifully dressed in palest lavender silk, with crimson roses in her hair and at her breast.

"I hope I look my best," she said. "I want to create a sensation, because all the nice people we know will be at the Pooley's to-night, and I don't intend our new *prima donna* to surpass me. Tell me how I look, Mons?"

"My dear, if only your heart were as lovely as your face."

"I should be perfect," laughing. "Ah! well, one must not hope for perfection on earth. Are you ready? I hope Chandos will be pleasant to-night!"

Azzed at the Pooleys, they were greeted with some effusion by their hostess.

"Mr. Burgoyne is already here," she said, "talking with Miss Wanteford. You will like to know her, Miss Knollys, her manner is remarkably pleasing."

"Pray don't disturb Mr. Burgoyne," answered the other, lightly; "but you may introduce me to Miss Wanteford presently. Lady Biscombe is dying to know her."

"I should be pleased if you would present me to the young lady; genius has always a charm for me," smiled Mons, and then a moment later she found herself confronted by a tall, slight girl, dressed in some gauzy black material, its sombre hue relieved by scarlet and yellow flowers. "Miss Wanteford," said the little lady, "I am delighted to know you—it is an honour," and then she offered her hand to the beautiful blushing girl.

"Lady Biscombe, may I hope you do not

intentionally ignore me?" asked a pleasant voice beside her. "It is not like you to desert old friends."

She laughed as her eyes rested on the young man's handsome face.

"Jeslons, Mr. Burgoyne? That is man like, but I thought you above the party passion; but then men were deceivers ever, and it was foolish to think you an exception to the rule. By the way, have you seen Geraldine, yet? I left her with Mrs. Pooley."

"I will go to her," he said, with something like a sigh. "Miss Wanteford, I shall see you again," and then he drifted away through the crowd, and Lady Biscombe possessed herself of his seat.

"I have so wanted to know you," she began, with her kind eyes smiling up at Arley, "not from mere curiosity, or quite because of your genius and sudden popularity, but because I feel we may be such close and dear friends. Your face invites confidence, as your voice demands admiration."

Arley stretched out her hand to her, impulsively.

"You are very good to speak so kindly to and of me," she said, softly. "Indeed, everybody is so good to me that I am filled with wonder. If you would let me be your friend, I should be proud and glad, only it is but just to you that you should know my origin."

"I know more than you imagine, and for the rest I am quite content to take you as you are. And now I am going to be very bold. I want you to lunch quite informally with me to-morrow; no one will be present says Mr. Burgoyne and Miss Knollys, and I am in such a hurry to improve our acquaintance. Will you come?"

"I shall be glad," Arley said, her heart turning towards the smiling, lovesome little woman. "You are most kind to me, I do not know how to thank you. Since my mother died I have had no friend."

"All that must be ended now. It is not good for the young to live so much alone; and in your public life I may even be of some assistance to you. I hope you will let me be," and she chatted on brightly until some old friends swooped down upon and carried her off.

Later on, Chandos Burgoyne rejoined the new singer.

"What are you doing here alone?" he said, in friendly fashion. "Let me take you to the picture gallery; it is well worth a visit," and nothing loth, she went.

There were a great many historical portraits, men famous in battle, women renowned for their beauty, but none attracted Arley's notice so much as the picture of a young, bright-faced girl.

"She is very lovely," she said, in a soft voice. "Who was she, Mr. Burgoyne? Do you know her story?"

"I am not quite certain if I ought to tell it to you," the young man answered, "it is so sad." Then, seeing the girl's entreating look, he added, quickly, "After all it would be ungracious to refuse you so small a request on the first night of our acquaintance. The lady in question was a remote ancestor of Mr. Pooley's, and their people being wealthy, cast about in their own minds how to compass a great marriage for her. She did not lack a suitor long. The first one who presented himself was a peer of the realm, of middle-age, and fair reputation.

"The poor girl (her name was Rowena) abhorred him, for she had already given her heart to the man who was then painting her portrait, and she believed him to be worthy of her love. So she utterly refused her elder wooer, and when her parents pressed her for a reason, she frankly acknowledged that she loved Jasper Milnes, and would marry none but him. Of course they were furious, and tried by every means in their power to break her faith, and finding this was all in vain they went to her artist lover.

"He was a sordid hound, and for a certain sum promised to release Rowena, and never

see her again; also to write a letter to her, confessing what was his shame and would be her death. Well, the letter was handed to her one evening as she was going to her room. She took it with a flush of hope. Surely Jasper had found some way out of their difficulties. There was a great light shining in her eyes as she wished her mother good-night, and her parents watched her go with no presentiment of what was to come. In the morning she was so late in appearing that her mother went to seek her. She found her lying fully dressed upon her bed—Jasper Milnes's letter clutched close to her heart—cold and dead! The shock of his faithlessness had killed her. That is all the story, Miss Wanteford."

"As you say, it is very sad," Arley answered, dreamily, "but it was far better she should die so, than live years and years to brood over her grief. She never could have been happy any more, because she never could have trusted in any profession of love or friendship again."

"Under such circumstances you hold, life is not worth living?"

"I do; it seems to me that when faith is dead and love betrayed, death is the only good thing left," and then she blushed, because she had been lured into saying more than she intended, and a sudden sense of shyness oppressed her. "I think we had best rejoin the other guests," she said, "our prolonged absence is almost an affront to Mrs. Pooley."

Chandos was in no hurry to return; but he had no reasonable excuse for loitering, and so conducted his partner back to the brilliant rooms. She did not make Geraldine's acquaintance that night—that was an honour reserved for the next day. But she spent a very happy evening.

"Everybody had been so kind," she told Ramingo, "she had nothing left to wish for, and on the morrow she was to lunch with Lady Biscombe.

"You are a very fortunate girl," the Italian answered. "Her ladyship can introduce you to the very best people; but you must not allow your head to be turned by flattery, and, remember, that until you are twenty-three you belong absolutely to me—as absolutely as though I were a slave owner, and you my slave."

"I shall not forget," Arley said, with a strange ache in her heart. "I owe you all I have, and, believe me, I am not ungrateful," and then she went away to think over all she had heard and seen that evening, to pray in her young soul that Heaven would be pleased to give her some true friend to brighten her hitherto lonely life.

The next day she dressed with greatest care, she was so anxious to please the little woman who had spoken so kindly to her; and certainly when she came down she was looking her very best, which is saying a great deal. Even Ramingo complimented her on her appearance, and it was with a sense of pleasure she stepped into a cab and drove to her ladyship's pleasant house.

"I am so glad you remembered your promise," said Mons, cordially, as she clasped the extended hand. "I feel myself quite honoured by your visit. Take off your wraps and then I will introduce you to Miss Knollys—she is Mr. Burgoyne's *fiancée*, and is staying with me during her son's absence from home. She was at the reception last night, but I do not think you noticed her;" and then she led the way to a large, handsomely furnished room where a lady and gentleman were sitting, both looking more than a little bored with each other's society.

The gentleman rose quickly as they entered, and his face flushed slightly.

"Miss Wanteford," he said, "we were just wondering if you intended disappointing us. Geraldine, let me introduce you to our new *prima donna*."

"You may dispense with that formality," Miss Knollys answered, with a cold smile,

"We have met before, although that fact appears to escape Miss Wanteford's memory."

"I do not remember to have seen you before last night," Arley said, hastily. She was chilled by the other's manner, and a wee bit hurt, "but I meet so many people now that it is easy to forget."

"That is hardly complimentary to me," laughed Miss Knolly's vexedly. "I have always prided myself upon my marked individuality" (here she stole a glance at her reflection in an opposite mirror). "Shall I tell you where first I saw you? It was at Portfarren, and you were singing for alms outside The Royal George!"

It was a cruel stab, cruelly and deliberately given, for Geraldine fancied her dignity in danger by communion with Ramingo's protégé, and she took a fierce kind of pleasure in noticing the agony of shame which flushed the sweet young face, and held the young girl silent and trembling.

"I too, remember," said Lady Biscombe, addressing herself to Chandos, "and I have since learned much. This poor child was left alone in the world at the age of twelve; pride forbade her to accept the pauper's refuge—fortunately, Signor Ramingo noted the rare beauty of her voice, and so adopted her. My dear, I am proud to call you friend!"

"And I," said Chandos, stretching out a friendly hand, and utterly ignoring Geraldine's frowning looks. He was full of pity for this young and lonely girl, whose fitful colour, and tear-dimmed eyes told how deeply she had been wounded. The incident was allowed to pass without further comment at the time, but Arley's visit was not a happy one, and she was glad when it came to an end.

"What on earth induced you to speak as you did to Miss Wanteford?" asked Chandos when she had taken her leave. "I never heard any remark which exhibited worse taste."

"I merely intended the girl to realise her rightful position," said Geraldine, coolly, "she is inclined to forget it, and be spoiled by flattery."

"I am ashamed of you!" Lady Biscombe said, hotly, "and remember that I allow no one to insult my chosen friends under my own roof."

CHAPTER III.

It was the close of the season, and all the fashionable world was preparing to leave town. The weather had been exceptionally fine, the season exceptionally brilliant. Ball, rout and concert, picnics, races and receptions had followed each other in rapid succession.

Signor Ramingo was in a transport of delight, for his *protégé* had won laurels for herself and him. He was proportionately proud of her, for her success had been phenomenal, her earnings beyond his highest hopes.

It pleased him, too, to see what lordly lovers bowed before her beauty, and whilst he marvelled over her indifference to them all, he exulted in it.

"She is lost to their fire," he thought, "and my influence over her will not cease with our bond. The girl does not know how to love. She is fortunate in that."

He prided himself upon his knowledge of her nature, whilst through all it was a closed book to him; and he never for a moment guessed the true reason of her coldness to her suitors.

She and Chandos had met often, and slowly, slowly there had grown up in the girl's heart a love for him so deep and so abiding that nothing but death could quench it.

It was all the stronger because it was so hopeless. It could not bring her joy, indeed, she was ashamed of it because was not Chandos bound to the cold beautiful woman who regarded her as some inferior being?

But she was proud enough to hide both pain and love, and she only longed in her

young heart to do some great and wonderful thing for the creature of her worship and then pass out of his ken altogether.

She never dreamed that he cared for her. She had no vanity—she only knew he seemed pleased to sit beside her, to talk with her when chance allowed, and to herself she said,—

"He is kind to all, kinder perhaps to me, because he pities me;" and she quite forgot that "pity is akin to love."

And Chandos? Well, it was not long before he learned the truth with regard to his own feelings. He knew well what the restlessness possessing him meant, he understood what feeling drew and held him to Arley's side. He had experienced both before in the days when he had loved Geraldine and believed that she loved him.

He knew there was nothing now in common between them; he had found his kindred soul too late. He felt that marriage with his fair fiancée meant misery for him, yet not for a moment did he dream of breaking his vows. He was a man of honour, and so his word was still his bond.

But he was awfully afraid of himself. A dread possessed him that he should fail in his truth, and the more it weighed upon him the more he determined to hurry on the so long delayed marriage.

And at this juncture he went to Geraldine and demanded an audience, which after much reluctance, her aunt permitted.

"Geraldine," he began, "it is a long time now since you promised to be my wife. I am weary of waiting. Tell me when I may claim my wife?"

"How absurd you are, Chandos! We are both young yet, and Aunt Emma cannot live for ever. She gets weaker every day. Do you wish me to lose my prospective fortune because of your impatience? Wait awhile!"

"I have waited long enough. Few men would have submitted to such delay."

"You have waited six years—rather more," she retorted, lightly. "Well, Jacob served seven years and another seven after that before he won Rachel. Can't you emulate his example? You should not blame me that I am prudent."

"Throw prudence to the winds," Chandos said, quickly. "I have enough for our wants."

"But how about the luxuries? I have never been accustomed to economy, and am wholly incapable of practising it."

"You prefer waiting for dead men's shoes? After all, nothing but disappointment may wait you in the end," he answered, with natural bitterness.

"I am willing to take the risk," she answered, coldly smiling. "Aunt Emma is a woman of her word. She will keep her promise faithfully to me."

Chandos felt in that hour he hated this beautiful, selfish woman, who would neither wed him nor set him free; but he controlled his passion a little longer yet, and going nearer to her, he said,—

"Why should we wait all our lives pandering to an old woman's whim? Your duty is surely to me, and I will do my best to make you happy."

"Oh, yes, I know that you are a gentleman, and would scorn to ill-treat a woman; but none the less I intend to keep to my earlier resolve."

"Did you ever love me?" he cried, passionately. "Have you ever considered my happiness in the least? Then why in Heaven's name did you promise to be my wife?"

"Because you asked me, and I liked you better than any other man of my acquaintance. Why can't you rest satisfied a little longer with the present state of affairs?"

"Because it isn't in man's nature to do so, at least, it isn't in mine. And if you care for me as little as you admit you do, why hold me to a bond of which both have grown weary? Yes, I am weary of your vagaries and your coldness. Give me my freedom, and I will be grateful to you all my days. Marriage can only mean misery for us."

The fair face flushed with sudden anger.

"Thank you for your very plain speaking; but permit me to say that as a man of honour you cannot take your release, and I refuse to give it. I will not be made a laughing stock for all our dear friends. And do you suppose I am blind to the reason of the change in your wishes? You have fallen in love with Miss Wanteford, and would marry her if you could, beggar's brat though she is!"

The hot blood mounted to his dusky cheeks.

"You have guessed my secret," he said. "I shall not seek to deny it. Can you wonder that my heart turned naturally to one who is as womanly as she is beautiful. Had you but loved me as once I loved you, had you but cared to keep me, I should never have been false to you. Once more will you release me?"

"Once more, no; and my answer is final!"

He took up his hat to go.

"It must be as you wish; but it is such women as you who drive men to the devil! I hope you may not live to repent this morning's work," and without another word he left her presence.

She stood tall and stately, a moment deep in thought, then she muttered,—

"That girl shall never have him. I will not suffer such ignominy;" and, dismissing the matter from her mind, she returned to Miss Knollys.

"Well, what did Chandos Burgoynes want?" snapped the latter.

Geraldine laughed.

"He wanted me to name the happy day, poor fellow!"

"And you, what did you say?"

"I told him that so long as you were spared to me I should devote my life to you. How could you question what my answer would be, dear aunt?"

The old woman sighed, her niece was the only creature on earth she loved, and sometimes she doubted the disinterestedness of her affection.

"I wonder," she said, "if you would cling so closely to me, Geraldine, if I were poor as well as old and disagreeable? There, child, I did not mean to hurt you, as the girl looked up reproachfully. "You are a good girl, and a beautiful one. Chandos Burgoynes can well afford to wait for his wife. Bear with me a little longer yet; my time is nearly spent, and when I am gone you will need a husband's care, being so young and lovely!"

That very night Chandos met Arley at the house of a mutual friend, and to his infinite relief Geraldine was not there.

"I have something to say to you," he began, when chance brought him to her side, "that is a story to tell, and a difficulty I want you to solve for me."

She looked up a little startled and nervous, then faintly smiling, said,—

"The preface is ominous, Mr. Burgoynes; but I will help you if I can."

"Then come with me into the garden, they are quite deserted now, and it is too warm to harm you."

He wrapped her cloak about her and led her out over flowering terraces and level lawns, until he came to a queer little rustic arbour, where they rested; and with his face turned towards her, Chandos began.

"It is the story of my most intimate friend, he is in doubt and diffidence, and wants advice, which I think you, of all women I know, are best capable of giving. Years ago, when he was quite a young man, he met and loved a girl beautiful as a poet's dream, and he had every reason to believe she entertained the most ardent affection for him; and for more than a year he continued in his fool's paradise. Then came a rude awakening, when he begged his fiancée to fix the date for their wedding, she declared there was a great and weighty reason for indefinite delay. Remember, he still loved her with all the mad folly of a first passion, and for awhile he did not urge his point. But the seasons came and went, the months lengthened into years, and

still his fiancee would not become his bride. Little by little the scales fell from his eyes, little by little he learned to know that lovely casket held no precious gem, that the woman he had idealised was sordid, calculating, and utterly incapable of love for any but herself. He grew to loathe his bondage, the hours he spent with her were hours of deadly weariness. Then came a change, he met a pure and lovely girl, and before even he knew it he had learned to long for her as man long for gold. But what could he do? How break the fetters he himself had forged? Am I wearying you? Shall I go on?" and by the clear light of the moon he saw her face was white and troubled, and knew she guessed the story he told was his and hers.

"Go on," she answered, in a very low voice. "You do not weary me."

"Well, he went to his first love. He asked her once again to fulfil her promise. She laughed and bade him wait. Then he told her all the truth, which, indeed, she had guessed, and begged for his freedom. That, too, she refused to grant. Miss Wanteford, I ask you, under the circumstances, what my friend is to do? Would he be justified in breaking faith?"

"No," she answered, her voice all shaken and heavy, "having given his word he must keep it at all costs to himself."

"Though he waits years and years for a loveless wife, and spoils all his future?"

"Yes, even then; being a man of honour there is nothing else he can do."

He suddenly caught her hands in his.

"Arley, will you be my executioner? Will you bid me leave you when all my life and all my hopes are centred in you? Will you look me in the face, sweetheart, and say I am nothing to you?"

"I wish I could," she broke out, wailingly. "O! I wish I could. But to-night I must tell you all the truth. I love you! Yes, dear, I love you, and though it is like death to send you from me I must do it for your sake and hers. I, too, am festered by a bond, not indissoluble as yours, but one that would hold us apart for years, and before it is ended I hope, I pray you will have forgotten me. You must go back to her, and Heaven help you to do your duty. Heaven help me to bear my pain!"

"Could love part thus?" Ah, no! no! Chandos caught the slight young form in his arms, and between his mad caresses prayed her to unsay the words which must part them for a life-time. But gentle as she was, much as she loved him, she was firm in her resolve; thrusting him a little away with her poor, trembling hands, she said,—

"Be merciful to me; I am but a weak and almost friendless girl, and my heart cries out for you—ah! help me to be strong, to show you your duty, and remember my own, and to do it."

He released her then. His arms fell to his sides, his ashen face and haggard eyes met her despatchingly. He knew she was right, that there was no escape for him, no hope for her, but it was so hard, so cruelly hard. When he spoke again his voice came in hoarse and laboured accents.

"You have conquered, Arley; but, oh! I had you answered, as I hoped and prayed you would, how different life would have been for us—how happy we should have been. But I accept my fate—what is to be must be—only kiss me once in token of farewell and renunciation."

In that last hour, when love lay bleeding and hope was dead in the inmost chamber of her heart, she could not gainsay him so small a request. A moment her arms were about his neck, her meek, young face, holy in its sorrow and self-sacrifice was lifted to his—her shuddering breath stirred the momentary silence.

"Good-bye!" she said, "go and forget me!" Without a word he turned and left her; it may be he dared not trust himself to speak. Long afterwards she returned to the house,

but Chandos was gone; nor did she see him again for several months, and for this small mercy she was not unthankful.

Early in November Miss Knollys died, and Geraldine pleaded with Lady Biscombe to give her a home until she became a wife. Quite in the commencement of the year, preparations were begun on a very grand scale for the event of the early season—viz., Geraldine's marriage, and so absorbed was she with milliners and modistes, that she had small leisure to bestow upon the bridegroom elect; and for this he was profoundly grateful.

He went about looking like anything but the proverbial "happy man," so that it was whispered he was marrying Miss Knollys simply and solely for her wealth. This rumour, however, was stifled, when it was found he had insisted that the whole of her vast fortune should be settled exclusively upon herself, and wonder was rife again as to his reason for marrying a woman who was so evidently distasteful to him.

Arley read the account of the wedding with beating heart and dim eyes. It had been a very grand affair, and the bride's grace and beauty were extolled in very gorgeous terms. The brief tour was to be spent in Scotland—it lasted in all but ten days, the bride being anxious to return to London and its gaieties.

It was far from a happy period to Chandos; his *distract* air annoyed Geraldine, and moreover, she had overheard ill-natured remarks concerning his half-hearted devotion to herself. Being a proud and vain woman she did not readily forgive these things, and showed in every conceivable way that she considered herself brutally treated. On the first night of their return to town she insisted upon dragging him in her train to the opera—perhaps he was not altogether unwilling to go—for, at a distance, he might look on the face he loved once more; but it did not materially add to his enjoyment that his wife watched his every look and gesture with suspicion, or that she smiled triumphantly when Arley appeared from time to time.

CHAPTER IV.

WITHOUT being in the slightest degree attached to her husband Geraldine was soon profoundly jealous; she hated to think he preferred another woman to herself. It was gall and wormwood to her to know he read all the littlenesses of her nature, and Arley's growing beauty and popularity weighed upon her like a nightmare. Was her own beauty on the wane that men so courted this girl who sprang from the ranks? Nothing but the remembrance of the earldom to which Chandos was heir, bridled her tongue, or reconciled her in the least to her lot.

Then, when the news came that his uncle, a hale, hearty man of fifty had married again—a mere nobody with only youth and comeliness for her dower—he was furious and reproached her husband in no measured terms for marrying her under false pretences. He treated her remarks with a contemptuous silence far worse to bear than bitterest recriminations, she would find a new way in which to wound him.

Such mean small natures as hers cannot love, but they can and do hate most genuinely. She turned her thoughts to Arley, if she would hurt Chandos it must be through "that girl," as she mentally called her. It was curious how as the season wore on Miss Wanteford's invitations to this or that fashionable function grew fewer and further between, although in concert room and at the opera her popularity was in no way diminished.

It was curious, too, how often the ladies who once had been proud to recognise her, would pass her by apparently unseen, and how a more familiar manner marked the conduct of many male acquaintances. Little rumours

emanating from what quarter none could tell, and not to Miss Wanteford's credit got about—she had been a gutter child, rescued from squalor and vice by Ramingo. She had tried to lure Chandos Burgoyne from his allegiance to his promised bride, she had been guilty of a hundred and one misdemeanours, condoned only on account of her beauty and talent.

It was in vain that Lady Biscombe tried to stem the torrent of popular opinion, in vain she declared that since his marriage Chandos and Arley had never met, and if, indeed, he had preferred her to his wife, the latter was the only one to blame.

But she was only one among a thousand, and as she was known to be Arley's most familiar friend, folks smiled and shrugged their shoulders as they repeated her warm speeches in the girl's defence.

As is always the case in such matters, those most concerned were the last to learn the truth; and Arley was in total ignorance until the storm broke and overwhelmed her with its fury.

Rumour loses nothing on its journey, and it was soon whispered that Geraldine had intercepted her husband and Arley on the eve of elopement. That good and true woman as she was, she had condoned his offence, and in no way revenged herself on her rival.

Then indeed was the luckless rival condemned. What fate could be ornate enough for her. She, this "gamin," this wicked, beautiful syren, had sought to desecrate the sanctity of home—she must suffer for her crime.

With no knowledge of what awaited her, Arley dressed that night for the opera. The play was *The Bohemian Girl*, and she was to enact Arline's part. When she came downstairs, the Signor complimented her on her appearance, and hoping she was in good voice, struck a few notes on a piano standing near by, bidding her sing "I dreamt I dwelt in Marble Halls."

"Beautiful! beautiful!" he exclaimed, as the pure, sweet voice died out. "You will take the house by storm—such a house as it will be to night, too. I understand royalty will be present. Do your best and I shall be proud of you."

Then the carriage drove to the door, and they were whirled away; and what happened that night, Arley never would forget until her dying day.

As the Signor anticipated, there was a packed house, and his heart beat high with the thought of his protégée's triumph.

How wise he had been to play the benefactor in the gone-by days. Why, the girl was a perfect gold mine to him, and the best of it all was, she did not in the least realise how very much she meant to him in the way of fame and wealth.

He even felt a certain pride in her beauty as she stood waiting to go on, and the thoughts crossed his mind that he might do worse than make her his wife—that would make her his for ever—but such a step required consideration.

A little flushed with excitement, the girl appeared on the stage, not to be greeted with the usual plaudits, but with a chill and ominous silence.

Then, as the first notes of her pure voice broke the stillness, from a remote corner of the house came a terrible sibilant sound. It was taken up and echoed by hundreds of voices. What could it mean? The terrified girl stood dazed a moment, Ramingo was in a frenzy of helpless rage.

"Go on," he whispered from his post behind an adjacent wing, and once more she essayed to be heard.

But they would not listen. With a low, wild cry the unhappy girl fled to the farthest end of the stage, and there crouched with her hands pressed hard upon her heart, and her white, despairing face turned towards her pitiless judges.

"You had better come away," the manager said, "they will not hear you!"

But she could not move, only she lifted her vacant eyes to his as if she did not understand. He took her by the hand and drew her forcibly away. Then the play went on, Arline's part being taken by an under-study.

"Her career is over," said the manager to Ramingo. "You had better take her home!"

The Italian was stamping round in his fury.

"What am I to lose everything? Are all my years of labour and expense to be wasted? I tell you I'll have justice! Let me discover the author of this outrage, and by Heaven he or she shall pay the fullest penalty of the law! I'll have damages, I tell you, such damages as shall rein the cursed hound! The girl's a good girl, I say, and I am her protector, her more than father. I will see her righted. And see you here, you can't slip out of your engagement so easily. To-morrow the public will pipe another tune. To-morrow night she shall appear again—shall, I say!—and she will get a different reception. Give me your hand, Arley; let me go. Great Heaven! girl, don't look like that—say something."

But she was incapable of speech or movement, although she was horribly conscious of all that passed around. So Ramingo, who was very strong, took her in his arms and carried her down to a carriage in waiting.

Not a word did either speak on the homeward way, but once safely in his own house, Ramingo said,—

"Look here, pull yourself together, you have got to listen to me, and be guided by me. Some one has been setting scandalous stories abroad concerning you. I know them to be lies, but we've got to prove that, and you have got to live them down."

He repeated then the tale as the manager had told it him, and the girl's head sank lower and lower until her face was almost hidden on her knees.

"Well," he said, in conclusion, "there's the whole case in nutshell. I suppose you are ready to fight your own battle?"

"I shall never sing again!" she wailed; "my heart is broken. Oh! let me creep away to some place where I am not known, and there die!"

"Rubbish! let us have an end of this folly! You have powerful friends who will help you to weather the storm, and then you will find yourself a greater personage than ever. Remember, too, all that I have done for you—all you owe me. You will be ready to appear to-morrow night."

Ah! but she knew otherwise! She knew her little day was over, for the shame of to-night had sunk so deeply into her heart, that the life she had once loved had become as a terrible nightmare to her.

What had she done that she should be so disgraced before the world? What enemy had dealt her this most cruel and fiendish blow? Ah! she guessed too truly, and covering her face with her hands she groaned aloud, but she could neither weep or pray, and so the shame of it all sank the deeper into her soul.

The morning papers commented severely upon the brutal treatment accorded Miss Wanteford, denying absolutely there was any ground for the scandalous reports concerning her, being so instructed by little Lady Biscombe. They also, though wrongly, declared the belief that some rival *diva* had circulated this through jealousy.

There also appeared a letter from Alessandro Ramingo, uttering a fierce protest against his protégé's enemy or enemies, and offering a very substantial reward for any authentic information concerning the author or authors of the libel.

Chandos took the paper into his wife's boudoir. He had been at his club the previous night, and this was the first intimation he had received of the affair.

"What does this mean?" he asked, sternly, "and what is your share in the matter?"

She took the paper from him, carelessly

scanned both article and letter, then lifting languid eyes to his, said,—

"I suppose it means Miss Wanteford is not 'all that fancy painted her.' With regard to myself I am at a loss to understand what your question implies!"

"Then I will speak plainly, I believe that you and you alone are at the bottom of this shameful conspiracy, and I will move heaven and earth to discover the truth. If I find you guilty, I shall not hesitate to proclaim your wickedness to the world. In such a case I will never see or live with you again!" he cried, passionately.

"Wait," she answered, calmly, "you have not considered your position. You assume I am guilty without the least proof. You go about declaring your innocence and that girl's. You are a prejudiced party, and your word will be taken *cum grano salis*. Say you leave me, you do not better your condition nor hers. The mere fact of your desertion will give weight to the charge brought against her. You decide to take matters to court. Well, black is often made to appear white, and the mere fact that you asked your release that you might marry her, would tell against both of you. See, you are hemmed in on every side. Whatever you do will but hurt her the more. You plainly comprehend the situation? It is unique!"

There was murder in his eyes, murder in his heart as he looked on her cruel, fair face. He saw as plainly as she, that he was the very last person on earth who could help the girl upon whom she had wreaked her vengeance.

She had neither affirmed nor denied her guilt; but he was confident that she, in some subtle way, had started these villainous rumours. He groaned as he turned aside.

"Heaven forgive you, woman," he said, "for I never will! You have bound me hand and foot, I am as powerless as Samson in the clutches of Delilah. To the outward world we must pose as husband and wife; but from to-day I am less than nothing to you. You are wife only in name. I pray you let me see you as little as you may!" and then he was gone; and Geraldine, with a short, cruel laugh, said to herself,—

"I am mistress of the situation, he cannot help himself, he dare not move a finger to help her. It is a double revenge; and his heroics do not frighten me. Words and deeds but rarely go together!"

Lady Biscombe meanwhile had driven round to see Arley. She was unfeignedly shocked at the girl's appearance. Her face was corpse-like in its pallor, and there were deep hollows beneath the heavy eyes. Even the slim young form was bowed, as though the weight of that unmerited shame were crushing it to the very earth.

"My dear," she said, gently kissing her, "we will not speak of last night's pain; but you will make haste to dress, we are bound for the Row."

The girl shrank back in horror.

"Oh, no! no!" she cried. "I only want to hide away from all who have ever known me. I cannot go!"

"But it is imperative you should. I may say, without vanity, I am a power in our set, and I want to show everybody that you are my dear and valued friend. Can't you trust to my guidance, Arley? You have come to the crisis of your life, child, and cowardice will not avail you anything now!"

"I will go if it is your wish," the other answered, apathetically; "but all your goodness will avail me nothing. I am a doomed woman!"

They drove together in the Row, somewhat to the astonishment of Lady Biscombe's *co-terie*; but the morning's papers had created somewhat a revolution of popular feeling and opinion, so that Arley did not find herself treated to any indignity. Toon, as Lady Biscombe said "she was a power," and the breath of scandal had never dimmed the brightness of her fame.

But the wretched girl beside her was un-

feignedly glad when the cruel ordeal ended. She was not by nature brave, indeed, few women were more unfitted than she to cope with foes. At the first shock of battle she was ready to throw down her arms and die. So there is small wonder that when Ramingo forced her to accompany him at night to the opera that all her soul was shaken with fear, and her poor brain was in a whirl.

At his command she went on when the call came. She hardly knew why she was there, she only saw like one in a dream a sea of faces bent upon her. There was no hissing, only an utter silence; but she heard the dreadful sound, it rang in her ears with pitiless iteration. She was living again the agony of the previous night. Her heart was consumed with shame and a grief too deep for words.

Once, twice, the pale lips parted. In silence the hours waited—but not a sound issued from them. Then suddenly, with a shriek that thrilled every heart with horror, she threw up her arms and fell face forwards on the stage.

In a scene of wild confusion the curtain was rung down.

When she came to herself she was lying in her own room, and the Signor was watching her with eyes full of rage.

"You fool! you idiot!" he exclaimed, with almost a scream. "To-night would have seen you triumphant. The public were already beginning to think you a martyr—the hall was at your feet—you kicked it away. Ungrateful that you are. You forgot the benefits with which I loaded you. You are unfit for public life. You have brought disgrace upon yourself and me, and I wash my hands of you. After to-night my roof does not shelter you. Go where you will, do what you please. Your welfare no longer concerns me!"

"You mean this?" she questioned, heavily, and he answered in the affirmative. "Then I will go. One day, Heaven helping me, I will repay you all."

CHAPTER V.

In the morning she rose, although indeed her strength was scarcely sufficient to allow her to make her few simple preparations.

Everything she had of value she left behind, packing only a few necessary articles of attire in a small trunk.

Ramingo refused to see her before her departure, and she was hardly sorry that he did so. In her extremity she decided to go to one true friend, Lady Biscombe.

"She will help me to earn my bread in some fashion," she thought. "I do not care how humble it may be so that I am at peace once more. I have had enough of the world. I want only rest. Oh! shall I ever find it on this side of the grave?"

Lady Biscombe met her with outstretched, welcoming hands.

"My dear," she said, "you have come to me in your trouble and that is well. I will help you if I can."

"Oh, I know! I know! You are goodness itself. Will you give me a shelter until I can find work? The Signor was very angry with me because of my failure last night, though indeed I told him I should never sing again—and so—ad so—until I find work I am without a home. O! dear Lady Biscombe, may I throw myself on your charity and mercy? I have no friend but you."

The little lady's eyes were bright with tears, as throwing wide an adjacent door, she said,—

"Ulric, come here, and tell Miss Wanteford how pleased we shall be to have her with us so long as she will stay. She has left Signor Ramingo, and renounces public life, so has come to us for a little rest."

A very big man came forward. He had an open, honest face, and his eyes were full of pity for the girl whose story he knew.

"You could not have given Mons a greater pleasure," he says, cordially, grasping the

little slender hand, "and I am glad to welcome you, Miss Wanteford. I hope your stay will be a very long one."

"You are very good, Lord Biscombe," the girl answered, gratefully, "but I must make haste to find work."

"There is plenty of time for that," he said, cheerfully. "In the meanwhile consider yourself a dear and honoured guest."

Arley was intensely grateful, but it was not in her nature, meek though she was, to eat the bread of charity, so she at once began the tedious, heartsickening search for work.

For weeks she was unsuccessful, but one morning Lady Biscombe came to her, an open letter in her hand.

"My dear, I have found something for you to do, if indeed the labour is not too tedious, the remuneration too small. This is from an old, a very old friend of mine, a professor of some very out-of-the-way thing or another; Mona had small respect for science. He is a great genius and bookworm; like most people of that class he is also poor. He lives quite alone with his old German servant Elspeth; but as his sight is failing him he requires an amanuensis, who desires rather a quiet home and the wherewithal to clothe herself, than a secretary who would give but so many hours a day. If you choose to accept the post my recommendation will be sufficient to secure it for you."

"Oh, Lady Biscombe, how can I thank you? Of course I accept. And when do I go?"

"Do not be so hasty, dear. Let me make you fully understand what your life with the professor would be. You would have to work hard and would seldom go out, but you would be treated with fatherly consideration. Then Professor Allen lives in a poor neighbourhood near Euston-square, and he receives no company. Of course I should visit you as often as circumstances permit, but it will seem like cutting yourself off from the world."

"And that is what I most desire," eagerly. "The world does not love me nor I the world. Oh, yes, I shall be glad to hide from all—all save you, dear friend, who have been my salvation. Will you tell Professor Allen I accept, and tell him too all the history of my past. I will enter no house under false pretences."

"He shall know all, Arley. Oh, by the way, I ought to tell you the salary is only twelve pounds per annum. Many a maid of all work receives far higher wages."

"I am not so useful as a maid of all work. The Professor is satisfied, then so am I!"

So Lady Biscombe went away to write her letter, and the answer duly arriving and being favourable, Arley packed her few belongings together and started for her new home, and so doing buried herself for ever from a world that had treated her all too cruelly. Lady Biscombe's instructions concerning the locality of the Professor's house were far too explicit to be mistaken, and about five o'clock one fine July afternoon Arley arrived at Merton House.

It was the queerest little place imaginable, standing alone at the head of Merton Street with a stretch of dead wall on either side, some black gates opposite, and farther on were other houses of all sorts of architecture and in all sorts of conditions. Merton House was itself unique. Until Professor Allen rented it, none but folks who really were "hard pushed" for shelter remained in it save for a few weeks; but he had lived there six years and was really fond of the place. It was so private, he said, and he liked privacy; it was cheap, too, and he was poor. All his learning had never added to his balance at the bank, he was too un-skilled in worldly wisdom ever to grow rich.

Arley accustomed of late to the luxuries of life sighed a little as her eyes rested on the dingy curtains at the windows, the door and shutters altogether, guiltless of paint; but stifling any natural feeling on that score, she alighted, paid the carriage, who, marvellous to

say, was civil and sober, and walked to the door carrying her small trunk. Three steep steps led up to the door, and when she knocked, she was startled a little by its sudden opening. A middle-aged woman stood looking down at her.

"You're the new young lady?" she said, in a kindly voice. "Come in, the Professor is expecting you," and then she was ushered into a queer little room.

There was not the ghost of a hall. One came straight from the street into a room which at first seemed all doors; but just now Arley had not leisure to notice such things, because out of the depths of a very shabby easy chair rose a tall, broad-shouldered, heavily bearded man, apparently of sixty years, his head was massive so was his jaw, but both the mouth and the soft, near-sighted eyes were benevolent.

"Come nearer, child," he said, in a fatherly way, "I would like to see your face if I might, but that is a privilege denied me; but Lady Biscombe tells me it is the index to your mind, so I will imagine how you look," and he patted her hand gently. "Elspeth, bring some tea and cake for Miss Wanteford, and you, child, take off your wraps, and whilst Elspeth looks after our comfort, we will get better acquainted. There," as he heard a quick drawn breath which threatened tears, "You are tired; rest—tell me nothing—I will talk. I know your story, poor child—poor child—I hope we shall teach you forgetfulness of it here."

Then he told her what were her duties, and was so kind and chivalrous that Arley thought life could not be anything but pleasant and peaceful even in this dreary locality.

Then Elspeth brought in the simple meal; tea, bread and butter with cress and cake added in honour of the new comer. Afterwards the Professor fell into reverie and evidently forgot his companion; so that when Elspeth had cleared away the remainder of the feast, she said, just as though her master had vacated the room.

"You may as well look over the place, now, miss. He won't miss you or want you. He's gone off into one of his thinking fits."

Arley, smiling, rose.

"This door," said her guide pointing to door number one, leads to the pantry. This, number two, to the bedrooms, and this number three to my kitchen and the coal cellar. Not that the coals come through here, they shoot 'em down through that iron trap. This room where you are is the keeping room and study in one. Now let's go upstairs; it's a mighty narrow staircase and not easy to climb this way, passing at the first room, "is where I store my preserves, it's a small place, ain't it? The next is the master's chamber, that is yours, and I hope you won't object to me passing through yours to get at mine, for there ain't another way of getting to it."

Arley leaned out of the window.

"Is there no garden?" she asked, half-despondingly.

"Garden!" shrilled Elspeth, highly amused. "Lor, no! if you look down you'll see nothing but stable; there ain't even a back door. But you'll soon get used to that."

"Oh, yes," the girl answered in a depressed voice, "habits is second nature."

"It's funny place," went on the old servant, who, German as she was, was rich in English idioms, having been but a child when her parents emigrated. "If you stand one side of the room and let fall a jug o' water it'll run like a river to the other side. You see the foundations are sunk on the left, and one day the place'll come over like a pack o' cards. There don't look so scared; it won't fall in my day nor yet yours, it's stood ages like this, and it'll stand ages more. Now you've seen all there is to see, let's go down; the master may want you."

The next day Arley settled to the dull routine of her new life; and it was dull. They breakfasted punctually at eight; at nine work began, and she wrote from the Professor's dictation until her fingers were cramped, her

wrist ached, and her chest suffered intolerable pain through long stooping over the desk.

Whilst she wrote he paced to and fro, until Arley grew giddy with his incessant movement, and all the while he was blissfully unconscious of her fatigue, as he rolled out sentence after sentence in his sonorous voice, with his mild eyes grown dreamy, and a rapt expression on his face.

They paused only for meals, which were served at irregular hours; indeed, except for Elspeth's impatient remonstrances and reproaches, there were days when her master would never have taken food at all, so wrapped was he in his researches.

Work lasted until eight or nine, then came the frugal supper, after which each retired to his or her own room. To a girl reared as Arley had been, accustomed to a bright world, this routine was naturally dull, but at least she was at peace, and that was all she now craved. Then there were the Sundays to look forward to, when the Professor always found some place of interest to show her. However long the journey they always walked except when it was wet, then they took tram or bus, sometimes spending the morning in the solemnity of St. Paul's, sometimes going to the Temple, and not infrequently wandering away to some quaint, half-forgotten old church, hidden quite away from the casual gaze of chance passers.

Then the Professor would discover some quiet place where they could dine frugally, after which they would wander along the Embankment or in some favourite park, and always he had such wonderful things to tell that Arley seemed to live in fairyland. When it was growing dark they turned homewards, as father and daughter might do, each delighted with their expedition, each so pleasantly tired as to go at once to their pillows, there to dream over the joys of the quiet day. So Arley grew content with her lot—but Lady Biscombe expressed great dissatisfaction with her appearance when she found time to visit Merton House.

"Oh! you naughty Professor!" she cried with upraised reproachful finger. "How have you fulfilled your word? I gave you my best friend to care for and you have neglected her shamefully!"

The Professor looked at her through his spectacles with mild wonder.

"My dear, I do not understand!" he began, when he was ruthlessly interrupted.

"Of course you don't, you understand nothing that pertains to earthly things. But you have been neglecting Arley shamefully; she looks dreadfully ill."

"My dear, I never knew, she has never complained," he said, distressfully, when Arley slipped her hand into his.

"I have no cause to complain. You are so good to me, and Lady Biscombe thinks I am ill because I am paler than I used to be! But I am quite well. Oh, yes, quite well, and as happy as I can ever be; do not distress yourself because of me."

His large white hand passed gently over her pretty head.

"I had forgotten that the young need pleasure," he said, with self-reproach. "I am glad, dear Mona, you reminded me of my duty. Now, what shall we do with the child?"

"We are leaving town next week for Ulric's little place near Cheddar; we shall be quite alone unless you and Arley will come to witness our matrimonial squabbles. I propose that you both go down with us; you shall have a room all to yourself, most beloved of Professors, where you may write book or invent a new explosive, and Arley shall give you her mornings—the rest of her days must be mine. Don't say no!"

"But," urged he. "I have so long left society I should not be happy in it; take Arley by all means, but I have never slept under any roof but this since I took the house."

"All the more reason why you should do so now; the house needs cleaning up dreadfully

I am sure, and Elspeth will be in the seventh heaven of delight if she may work her way upon it. One of my most trustworthy maids shall come down to help her; let me tell Uriel you will at least give us a few days."

"My dear, it is not well to decide in a hurry, but I will write you to-morrow if I do not forget—it I do not forget—I grow so very absent-minded."

"Then come to Bourswood, and we will sweep the cobwebs from your brain," retorted her ladyship, audaciously, and the upshot of it all was the Professor broke through the habits of long years and suffered himself to be persuaded into making the desired visit.

He was very happy there in his own fashion, rambling alone for miles over the lovely country, bringing home specimens of flowers, beetles or quartz, at his own sweet will, and in the evenings, when Mona played to them, or Arley was persuaded to sing, he would treat Lord Biscombe to learned monologues, or pore over dry-as-dust books in the happiest frame of mind. But, at the end of the week, hearing other visitors were expected, he took alarm.

"My dear," he said, in his mild way to Arley, "if you would like to stay longer do so, but I am going home."

"I, too," the girl answered, "the expected guests are people I used to know; I cannot meet them," and Mona, seeing how sensitive the girl was on the subject, did not urge her to stay.

Poor Arley! she had flashed like a meteor upon the world, and as quickly passed from its ken. In a little while she would be forgotten, save at odd times, and people would cease to ask each other what had become of the brilliant cantatrice whose career had been so short.

She went back to the quiet life at Merton House, and took up her old duties with renewed energy, and but for the thought of what might have been, she would have been contented.

In due time, Mona's guests arrived, but Mrs. Burgoyne was not amongst them. She and Lady Biscombe were not even acquaintances now, for in her heart of hearts the latter knew that Geraldine was the promoter of her favourite's ruin, and that she had made her husband but a wretched wife.

Geraldine affected not to care, but nothing could have wounded her vanity more than Mona's tacit ignoring of all previous intercourse.

CHAPTER VI.

MATTERS had gone from bad to worse with the Burgoynes. They rarely met save at the house of some mutual friend, or when Geraldine gave a dinner or ball, and then folks remarked the master of the house was a perfect kill-joy with his sombre eyes and gloomy face, forming such an utter contrast to his beautiful, smiling wife. Others, who were wiser, pitied him for the ruin he had made of his life, and esteemed handsome Mrs. Burgoyne but lightly.

But, careless of the opinion of the few, utterly regardless of her husband's misery, Geraldine went on her triumphant way.

She had no child, for that she was unfeignedly thankful. She hated children she would declare publicly, they were such an intolerable nuisance, and she was quite unfitted to play the mother's part, nor did those who heard her seek to contradict such an obvious truth.

She treated Chandos, when they chanced to meet, with a cool contempt which almost maddened him, but he would not give her the satisfaction of seeing this; and so they drifted on from month to month, and then one day she presented herself before him in his study; he had taken up parliamentary work, with an open paper in her hand.

"See here," she said, violently, "there is no chance of your succession to the earl-

dom of Rousley; the Countess has presented her husband with twins—mother and children alike are doing well—and I consider that you did me a gross wrong when you made me your wife. I never should have married you but for the sake of the title you said would one day be yours."

"I never uttered such a word," Chandos said, wearily. "You are but repeating your own hopes and wishes; and I gave you a chance of freedom, but you would not accept it. If blame attaches to either, it is to your self."

"Of course, it is manlike to lay that upon my shoulders. You were heir-presumptive to the earldom."

"Until my uncle married once again. I am glad he did. I am glad too to know that his wife makes his happiness. He is a man to be envied."

She stood looking down upon him with angry, contemptuous eyes.

"You are a fool to your own interests," she said, and without another word, left him.

Casting out his arms before him, he buried his face upon them, and sank into deep and bitter thought.

Why had he been so ready in the past to pledge his faith to this woman with the fair face, and cruel heart? Why did he so wilfully blind himself to her faults and foibles? What a fool he had been! and how he had suffered for his folly.

And then by degrees his thoughts turned to Arley, who was and must be an one dead to him. Where was she? None but Lady Biscombe knew, and she would not divulge the secret.

Well, she was wise, Arley could never be anything to him, nor he to her; but it would have comforted him to know that she was well and prosperous; that she had even forgotten him and was happy with some worshipful lover. So he brooded over his lot, of "what might have been," ah! the bitterness of that one little clause, of what he feared could never could be, and life lay stretched before him like a hideous panorama.

It was in this wise that two years passed, and at the close of the London season, Geraldine announced her intention of going with some friends to Boulogne, Trouville and other places of note. You do not care for such things," she added, lightly, "so I do not ask you to accompany me, you would be but a kill joy at the best. Where shall you spend your vacation?"

"I hardly know, but, of course, I will acquiesce you with my movements."

Then she bade him a careless good bye, and went on her way rejoicing.

At Boulogne there was no more fashionable woman than Geraldine, nor any such daring flirt. This was a new development of hers. She began to fear that her beauty was losing its first freshness because her little court of admirers had not increased, and she set herself to work to remedy this.

An old and experienced campaigner assured her that her manner had too much repose in it, that men like to be amused; and so she cast aside her statuesque air, and adopted a frivolous manner which, though it sat strangely upon her, increased her popularity with the tribe of "mashers" and fast men frequenting such resorts as she chose.

Her toilets were marvels of art. Her ball dresses the envy of all her female friends, and her bathing costumes the most *entre* in all those not too particular foreign towns in which she delighted.

She, who openly denounced the costumes of ballet dancers as indecent, did not hesitate to promenade the beach under the battery of hundreds of eyes, in very scanty raiment indeed, her long yellow hair floating about her shoulders, and her glances instinct with coquetry.

She would laugh, too, when she thought how horrified Chandos would be could he see her as then she was.

"I did not half enjoy myself before my

marriage," she said, confidentially, to a giddy young matron. "I was always dancing attendance on Aunt Emma"; but I am going to make the most of my life now, while my beauty and my love of pleasure last!"

But she rather over-estimated her strength, and catching a severe chill returned home in October ill and worn with neuralgic pains.

Chandos took her at once to Bournemouth; but her health did not materially improve, and her temper suffered in proportion to her ailments.

A new season commenced, and with her usual obstinacy, she insisted upon going at once to town, although Chandos and her medical men advised complete rest and quiet.

"Pooh!" she said, disdainfully, to the former, "you think I do not see through your motive to keep me in stagnation. Of course you have bribed Sreatham and Abbot to further your ends, because you are jealous of my popularity. It was an ill day when I became your wife!"

She paused as if expecting an answer, but he made none. Perhaps he dared not trust himself to do so, and she went on irritably.

"If I have not spoken the truth, why are you so silent? I am going to town, I won't forfeit my pleasure for any consideration. Do you understand me now, my husband?"

"Yes," he said, heavily, "I quite understand my wish has no weight with you."

And so they went to town. He to his parliamentary duties, she to her pleasures; and soon he began to notice that a change was taking place in her.

In the morning she would be pale and heavy-eyed, listless, and irritable, but as the day wore by she gradually recovered tone and brilliancy, and whilst he was still attributing this to the excitement of her daily life, Dr. Sreatham requested a private interview with him.

"I think," he said, gravely, "you hardly realise the danger your wife runs in giving herself up so wholly to her besetting passion!"

"What do you mean?" questioned Chandos, quickly. "To what passion do you refer?"

"Is it possible that you are ignorant of the fact that Mrs. Burgoyne is addicted to the use of chloral. She takes it first to ease her neuralgic pains. Now she takes it as the drunkard takes strong drink. She is a slave to it, and you must use every means in your power to cure her of her vice—for it is a vice and deadly one!"

Chandos looked at him in blank astonishment.

"Why did you not tell me before?" he asked.

"I supposed that you knew. I am sorry I was so long silent. But being fully aware of the fact now, you will exercise your authority with Mrs. Burgoyne for the sake of her own welfare."

"Exercise his authority!" he repeated, and laughed over the words when he found himself alone. Was he not a mere cypher in the household?

It was not that he was in any way weak or irresolute, but like most sensitive natures he hated scenes and vulgar recriminations, and so had allowed many things to pass unheeded and unrepented, knowing that entreaties and commands would alike be powerless to move Geraldine from any fixed purpose.

She held that her own opinion was infallible, and even the stubbornest proofs would not shake her comfortable self-admiration. But she was his wife, he must do what he could to save her from herself.

It said much for his generosity and forbearance that he went to her in kindly fashion, speaking gently and patiently. It also said a great deal as to her character when she flashed on him like a fury, bidding him to meddle with matters that concerned him, angrily declaring she would do as she pleased, that Dr. Sreatham was a fool for his pains, and she knew best what was good for her.

Then he spoke sternly.

" You are my wife," he said, " and I shall exercise my authority over you, seeing that entreaties are useless. From to-day the first servant I detect purchasing or procuring chloral for you shall be at once and ignominiously dismissed. Heaven knows our marriage has been an utter failure, that we have not been happy together; but I should be less than a man if I stood by calmly watching you slowly do yourself to death ! " and then he left her, and having given strict orders to the servants not to supply their mistress with a drug which meant certain death to her soon or late, went out to brood over his most bitter lot.

But he did not understand the cunning of such a nature as Geraldine's, or the many ways in which she would circumvent him; consequently he was not fit in such matters to cope with her.

She laughed in her sleeve at his precautions, they were utterly futile, and his surveillance made her angry. She took pleasure in thwarting him in every conceivable way, little reckoning the foolish woman, what such a line of conduct meant to herself.

One night she dressed with especial care for a ball, given by one of the new friends Chandos disapproved, and it came like a shock to her when her maid deferentially suggested the use of a little rouge. " Madame was so pale," she turned in anger upon her. Dared the girl suggest that she was growing pass? That the clear pink and white complexion of which she had been so vain was losing its soft tint ?

The girl was French, and naturally adroit, so she hastened to explain that madame had never looked lovelier, but just to-night she was a thought too pale and spirituelle. " Now the least little touch of colour," and then Geraldine, making no further objection, she applied the requisite tints to the pale cheeks, announcing the result as superb.

Mrs. Bargoyne did indeed look beautiful as she stood before her pier-glass, clad in delicate lace and silver robes, with diamonds scintillating in the gold of her hair, on the snow of her soft throat; and won to good temper by her own exquisite appearance she ran down to Chandos.

" I think I am looking particularly well," she said, " but I would like you to endorse my opinion."

She was so fair and smiling as she stood in the open doorway that Chandos was moved to a kindness she did not deserve, although, indeed, he was glad for ever after that he extended it to her.

" You are looking lovely ! " he answered, gravely. " You have exceeded yourself ! "

Her vanity was pleased beyond measure, and entering, she put an arm about his neck.

" You deserve some reward for so pretty a speech," she said, laughing. " We are not a very Darby and Joan-like couple, but you may kiss me if you will ! " and as he gravely laid his lips to her hot cheek he did not guess it was the last time he should look upon her living face.

He clucked her carefully, and having escorted her to the carriage, went himself to the House, there being a most important debate that night.

Meanwhile, Geraldine flung herself with a strange, wild abandonment into the pleasures of the scene where she moved as a queen by virtue of her grace and beauty.

Those who saw her that night talked often afterwards of her brilliancy and gay, good humour, and whispered among themselves that never in all her life had she shown such advantage.

She danced every dance. She refused partners by the dozen, and not until the ball was nearly ended did she feel any return of that old distressing pain in the head. Then she had sufficient wisdom to summon her carriage and drive home, despite the regrets and exhortations of her hostess and her admirers.

" It would never do," she mused, " to let them see me under the influence of one of my

horrid attacks. They would always remember afterwards how hideous even a beautiful woman can look when she is thoroughly ill."

Her maid, who was sitting up for her, hastened to disrobe her, but before she had finished her task Geraldine with rare and suspicious kindness dismissed her, saying,—

" I can manage very well, Celeste, and you must be very tired. I shall not want you again to-night," and being alone she flew to a little cabinet from which she took a small, dark-coloured phial. " My comforter ! " she murmured to herself, half caressingly, and pouring out some drops with an uneasy hand drank them with avidity; and having returned the phial to its place she cast herself upon her bed and soon fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

Later on Chandos returned.

" Your mistress is home ? " he said to the pompous servant in waiting.

" Long since, sir. She has gone to her room." So without a thought of what was passing in that upper chamber he went to his own much needed rest.

As usual, the next morning his breakfast was served in solitary state, but hardly had he begun to discuss his ham and eggs when the door was flung open unceremoniously, and Celeste, white of face, wild of eye, cried,

" M'sieur ! M'sieur ! for the dear Heaven's sake, come ! Madame is dead ! "

With a great horror tearing at his heart he rushed upstairs to his wife's room. There she lay with but half her finery removed, her long, golden hair all loose about her face and throat, the false flush yet upon her smoothly-rounded cheeks. She was dead, quite dead, and as he looked down upon her with pitying eyes he was glad his last words to her had been kindly ones. He had long ceased to love her, but her untimely end filled him with a vast compassion, and to his credit let it be recorded that in this hour he gave no thought to Arley or his possible happiness.

" An overdose of chloral," said the doctors, and people were full of pity for Geraldine's untimely end. They buried her with the dead and gone Bargoynes, and the widower went abroad until the term of his mourning should expire.

CHAPTER VII.

A TEAR had come and gone since Geraldine Bargoyne's tragic end, and her husband was still a wanderer on the face of the earth, without home or home ties, whilst Arley Wanteford was still living her quiet, busy life in the queer old house close by Euston-square. She had grown accustomed to the monotony now, and if she were paler and thinner than she should have been, her beauty suffered no detraction.

Then old Elspeth and the Professor were so good to her, and Mona's letters came like glimpses of sunlight, so that she had not half the leisure for repining as one might be tempted to believe.

The summer, which had, for a miracle, been intensely hot, was over, and with the autumn it seemed to Arley that her kind friend was less strong than he should have been.

Gradually, as the winter approached, their Sunday walks to which she always looked forward with pleasurable anticipation grew shorter and more infrequent—it was such a new thing for the Professor to stay in the house through all the long day, and she began to grow anxious. But when she spoke to him with regard to his health, he only rolled his lion-like head from side to side and smilingly answered, he was quite well, " only a little out of sorts you know," and the dull weather tried him. But when Christmas was near at hand he fell seriously ill, and a doctor was called in.

He looked very grave as he bowed over the patient, and by some subtle instinct the latter

knew this, for of late his sight had all but failed him utterly.

" Doctor," he said, with his mild smile, " You need not try to buoy me up with hope ; my work is nearly ended, when it is finished I am ready to go. How long will you give me ? "

" You may probably last a month ; certainly not more."

" Thank you ; I shall yet finish my book. Perhaps after death I may be famous, though posthumous glory was not what I desired."

Then, when the doctor had gone, he called Arley to him,—

" Come, my child," he said, cheerfully, " let us work whilst day is with us," and though tears dimmed her eyes, and her hand shook so that she could scarcely hold her pen, she wrote on and on until he was too weary to dictate longer. And so it was until the last word of the Professor's great book was written—the book upon which he had been engaged all his life—which was to have made him famous through all ages. And, as she wrote " Finis," he turned to her with his mild face lit up by a strange, sweet smile.

" That book has been the life of my life," he said, quietly, " now it is ended I too shall pass away. Why do you weep child ? Death has no horror for me." He took and fondled her hands, and a wistful look stole into his blind eyes. " It may be I have misused my life, it may be I have missed many joys. I think now I should have been a wiser and a better man if I had mixed more with my fellow creatures. I seem to see how many golden opportunities of doing good I have thrown away ; but I wanted to benefit all mankind by my learning—a big ambition, Arley, and beyond my power to realise. Perhaps if it all had to come over again I would act differently—but I cannot tell ; my heart was in my work, and my work being ended all my life faints within me," and then a little later in feebler tones. " What little I have to leave is Elspeth's, she has served me long and faithfully, she is growing too old for work ; and for your future, dear child, I have no fear. Lady Biscombe has promised to care for you when I am gone ; and in time you will marry. Oh, yes ; for now I see that love is more than all ! Now I will sleep ; it has grown late, whilst we talked."

A day or two later he passed quietly and peacefully away, and the funeral being ended Mona carried Arley away. Elspeth returned to her own land, and her own people, and once more the little old house was empty.

* * * * *

HAVING due regard for Arley's pride and independence, Mona was far too wise to ask her to remain at Bournwood as a guest ; so a few days after her arrival at that hospitable place, she went to her with a proposal.

" My dear," she said, very gently. " Ulric and I have been talking matters over, and knowing what a very proud little woman you are, we concluded you would refuse to make us happy by further stay here unless we found you work to do. Now, it so happens the children's music teacher is leaving Bournwood to be married, and we want to supply her place. Will you remain with us dear Arley as their instruress and our beloved friend ? "

Tears rose to the girl's lovely eyes.

" You are inventing this post for me, Lady Biscombe ! "

" Call me, Mona, it is less formal ; and you are quite wrong in your supposition. I would like to know who is more fitted than you to instruct my little ones in the art in which you excel. You will say yes, dear ? "

" How can I answer no, when I love you so that I could spend my life in your service ? But I do not understand why you should be so good to me."

Mona smiled back at her.

" I always wanted a girl friend when I was young, and though poor Geraldine and I were looked upon as comrades, in reality we had not a thought or taste in common—in you I

find what I have looked in vain and so long for."

So Arley stayed on at Bouswood, and when a new season commenced, and the duties of her position called her to town, Lady Biscombe said,—

"I shall feel quite safe in leaving my babies to your care. I object to town life for them; but I do wish you were going with us, Arley!"

"As I do now; life is infinitely happier for me here."

"By the way, dear, Chandas Burgoyne is returning home," and, without waiting to see the effect of her speech, her little ladyship hurried away to her babies.

It was a July afternoon, and Arley sat sewing in the veranda which surrounded Bouswood House; the children, worn out by the heat of the day, had fallen asleep in the orchard beyond, and to all intents and purposes, she was alone.

Small wonder if her thoughts went straying to the past—that past when her triumphs yet were new, when the world seemed opening—to her at its brightest and best. Oh! not for the wealth of the Indies, would she return to the scenes of her victories and defeats; she was happier far hidden away here, in the heart of the pleasant country, if no extravagant joy came to her, neither was she crushed by overwhelming grief, and she dare hardly help to know more than content through all the years to come.

Of Chandas she had heard nothing. Perhaps he had forgotten her; perhaps his heart revolted at taking a woman to wife, whose name, however, unjustly, had been banded from lip to lip; who had suffered public shame and reproach.

She bowed her head low upon her hand, and a few bitter tears trickled through the slender fingers.

It was hard she should suffer, who had not sinned; and whilst she thought thus, a shadow fell athwart the level lawn before her. Quick, light steps were coming towards her; but she did not hear them, and she gave a sharp startled cry, when a man's voice spoke her name.

"Arley! "

She looked up then to find Chandas standing before her—Chandas, with haggard face and hollow eyes, with little lines of suffering graven on her brow, and threads of silver in his hair—but still Chandas!

She tried to speak, but she could not. Even her limbs refused to obey her will, and there she sat, looking up at him with eyes half blinded by rapture, and her heart bursting so fast it seemed it must choke her.

"Lady Biscombe has sent me to plead my cause," said Chandas; "she told me I should find you here. She led me to believe I should find you unchanged. Arley, is it so? Will you tell me, that after all, the shame and sorrow you have borne for my sake, you still can love me?" Her lips quivered as her tremulous hands went out to meet his. "Perhaps," she said, under her breath, "I bathe you the more for that thing," and then he would have taken her in his arms and kissed her, but she held him still a little aloof, entreating. "Listen a moment, Chandas, before you pledge yourself to me. It is a woman's nature to love a man in proportion to the pain she has borne for his sake, but men are different, and I want you to understand fully, what it is you would do? You are of gentle birth, I of the people, and I can give you nothing but my love, for even my fame has gone from me. I would not win it back if I could, because I can never face so cruel a world again. Think what you will be giving up for me!"

"I give up nothing I prize," he cried, passionately. "Oh! my sweet, come to me now, my heart is all hungry for your love!" and then he would not be repelled; but he snatched her close to his breast, and kissed the dear lips which did not now rebuke him, and he knew as he held her fast, that he had

found the treasure for which he had long sought so vainly. Rest and joy had come to him at last, and was not the world well lost for the sake of these goodly things?

And when each had grown quieter, Arley, lifting her head from its resting-place, asked, half-fearfully,—

"You will not ask me to go back to the old set, Chandas? Although, indeed, if it is your wish, I will try to school myself to obey it."

"I ask no such sacrifice of your dear heart. In all I think or do, I seek only your happiness; and I have resolved, always provided that my plans meet your approval, to emigrate to Australia. I don't mean that we shall live the rough life of the ordinary colonist, rather that we should reside in Sydney, where I can find something to do in the political world, and where you shall never be troubled by a word or look relating to your past. I have no relatives but my uncle; he has his children, and does not need me; I wrong no one in going, and out there we shall lead a fuller and freer life. Is it yes, or no, my wife? Will you come out with me, or do we wait?"

"Let us go," she answered quickly. "I shall breathe more freely in a land where no one guesses my story. Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! how good you are to me! What shall I do to prove my gratitude and my love?" and her beautiful eyes were wet with the happiest, proudest tears she had ever shed in all her young life.

"You shall live to bless me with your presence and your love. What more can a man desire? And you will come to me soon; I cannot brook further delay, Arley."

So three weeks later there was a very quiet but pretty wedding at Bouswood, and the Earl, Chandas Burgoyne's uncle, gave away the bride; Lady Biscombe's little daughters figuring as bridesmaids. The Countess, with the Biscombes, making up the small company, and the little Countess, as she kissed her new niece, said, cordially,—

"I am so glad to know you are one of us at last. Poor Chandas suffered so much through his first wife, I am rejoiced to think he is going to be happy now!"

So the newly-wedded pair sailed for their adopted country, and there, as the years went by, Arley saw her children growing up around her in beauty, strength and honour. She saw her husband esteemed of all men, his work appreciated, his opinion valued; and she saw what was best of all, that he never regretted his second choice, that with each passing year she had grown dearer and dearer still to him, and, on her knees, she thanked Heaven that those goodly gifts were hers.

[THE END.]

The largest organ in the world has just been built by Messrs. Hills, of London, for the Town-hall of Sydney, New South Wales. The reed stop is of the enormous size of sixty four feet, and there are five manuals, this being the only organ which has so many. The number of pipes is exactly ten thousand, and the structure includes every known method and invention relating to organ building. The cost was sixty thousand dollars.

Paste diamonds are not so much talked about here and now as they were in Europe a hundred years ago; but they exist, and they are not the mysterious things that most persons think them. They are nothing more than an excellent quality of glass ground with many facets, much as the real diamond is ground, though of course with less care and labour. Paste diamonds are often backed with silver foil to enhance their brilliancy, and it is this that gives them their peculiar lightness of colour. They are used not only for personal ornament, but to decorate articles

"Whom only man is vile"—In the woman's suffrage convention.

A LAWYER generally feels himself competent to break any will except his wife's.

Why is the letter A the best remedy for a deaf woman? Because it makes her "hear."

Did you ever notice how idiotic the smile of a pretty girl is—when it is directed toward someone else?

TEACHER: "What are draft riots?" Pupil: "Quarrels caused by people not shutting the door!"

"WHAT is your gross income?" "I have no gross income. My income is petite, slender, and spirituelle."

TEACHER: "Methuselah lived nine hundred years." Boy: "He did, did he? Well, wasn't that pretty tough on his son-in-law?"

The young pullet who lays her first egg no doubt imagines the case is unique in the world's history.

CASHIER: "Do you know when double entry was first used?" Book-keeper: "Yes; when the animals entered the ark two by two."

"What's this card in your pocket, John?" asked his wife. "That? Oh, before I went to lunch that was a bill of fare. Now it's my table of contents."

WHEN a young man and his best girl get into a swing by themselves, it is remarkable how they will mix up oscillation with oscillation.

"THAT man Slosher is getting to be a terrible drinker," said Drosher. "What makes you think so?" "Why every place I go into after drink I find him there."

MRS. PASSEK: "Here is an article in this paper on 'The Girl to be Avoided'—" Mr. Greatcatch: "Yes, I know. The girl who wants to get married."

ONCE there was a party of Indians invited to attend the theatre, and when they were asked about it, they only said, "One man played the fiddle, and another played the fool."

"His friends all advised him to go on the stage," said the unsuccessful tragedian's father. "Yes, I see now it was his friends egged him on, and the audience egged him off."

SHE: "No. I'm not engaged to him. If you saw us sitting and talking together, you could easily see there was nothing between us." HE: "I did; and not seeing anything between you, thought you were engaged."

THEIR wear the kilts: "English regiments have the right to bear arms. Haven't they?" "Of course." "But it is different with Scotch regiments." "How is that?" "They have the right to bare legs."

JOHNNY IS NOT A PROPHET.—A lesson in French: "Johnny Borkin, what's the meaning of conf?" "Egg, ma'am." "That's right. And is it masculine or feminine?" "Can't tell till it's hatched, ma'am," said Johnny.

MAGISTRATE: "You are accused of striking a drowning man a fatal blow with a hammer." PRISONER: "Oi was tryin' to save his life, y'r honour. Sare didn't Oi schwitz on to help him?" "But you took a hammer along and killed him with it." "Yis, sir. If ye don't kill 'em the'll grab ye ivery toime, y'r honour."

CONJUROR (pointing to a large open cabinet): "Now, ladies and gentlemen, we come to the last item on the programme. I will ask any lady in the company to step on the platform and get into this cabinet. I will then shut the door. When I open it again the lady will have disappeared without leaving a trace." Gentleman (aside to his wife): "I say, Matilda, you do me the favour and walk up.

SOCIETY.

THE word lady literally means loaf-giver. EMMIE is going to be a good deal worn as a lining for evening wraps this winter.

Some of the French fashion plates are introducing distinct, if very slight, panniers.

ROBINSTEIN's mother has died in Odessa at the age of eighty-six. She was her famous son's first teacher in music.

PATENT LEATHER shoes are no longer used by fashionable Englishwomen for evening dress, a preference being shown for black satin.

One million nine hundred and twenty-five thousand one hundred and thirty pilgrims visited the holy coat at Treves.

One of the silver-wedding presents received by the Empress of Russia is an ermine mantle which cost ten thousand pounds. This is the gift of the nobility of the provinces of Kher-

The opening of Parliament, which was originally fixed for 2nd February, has been deferred until a week later. It is now very probable that the Queen will herself open Parliament next year.

It is no longer good form to call the Emperor of Japan the Mikado. He is now called Katai, and the Chinese Emperor answers to the title of Bakudahan.

The German Emperor has rather a dislike for racing, because he regards it as giving encouragement to gambling; but he is, indirectly, the largest owner of racehorses in Germany.

GRAND DUKE GEORGE, second son of the Emperor and Empress of Russia, is so much better that instead of spending the winter in Algeria he will join his parents at the Caucasus, and go a cruise in the Mediterranean in the early spring.

The Queen and Princess Beatrice are both anxious to pay another visit to Florence, and the Empress Frederick wishes to make a lengthened stay there; but until a perfectly clean bill of health can be issued, and the sanitary arrangements and water-supply are certified to be unexceptionable, the city cannot expect to be favoured with the presence of Royal personages.

Hair ornaments are becoming more elaborate and showy. The pins of cut-work approach the size and importance of the old back combs. Gold fillets are heavier and more richly chased and ornamented than those of last year. They are broader in the centre and decidedly suggestive of coronets.

KING OTTO, of Bavaria, struts about the gardens of his prison palace with a wooden musket on his shoulder and takes an imaginary shot at everyone who approaches. The King is forty-three years old, and his mental condition seems to grow worse rather than better.

TZAN is a tale abroad that fur skirts will actually appear, if the winter proves a hard one, and short jackets of the same will be worn with them. Very stiff and cumbersome would be such a skirt, as there is no draping and gathering the skin of an animal with the hair or wool left on. It will have to be modelled on a block, and worn like a sheath.

THE quaint old Austrian custom of a bride being cast off, as it were, by her countrymen when she takes to herself a foreign husband, was an interesting feature at a recent royal marriage. The Archduchess entered the church followed by a long train of Royal and noble Austrian ladies. They stood in a semicircle around her until the moment the bridegroom placed the ring upon her finger; they then turned and left her, for she was no longer a countrywoman of theirs. For a moment the Princess stood alone—unattended, at least; then, a number of Saxon ladies ranged themselves behind her; she had become a Saxon.

STATISTICS.

THERE are thirty-eight letters in the Russian alphabet.

Thirty-three words a minute is considered rapid writing.

There is one horse for every twelve persons in this country.

Forty-eight different languages are said to be spoken in Mexico.

A convict earns about tenpence a week while in penal servitude.

The total police force of England and Wales is to-day composed of very nearly thirty thousand men of all ranks. Of this total 15,270 are metropolitan police.

GEMS.

No man falls into contempt but those who deserve it.

A CHIVALROUS man will never make light of an old flame.

WHEN trying to outwit others, take care that you don't outwit yourself.

RATHER not to a friend every secret that you possess, for how can you tell but what he may sometime or other be your enemy.

TIMIDITY creates cowards and never wins success. It is a strong and abiding faith in one's own nobility to perform which overcomes difficulties that others think cannot be surmounted.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TURNIPS are delicious, cut in small cubes, boiled in salted water until tender, and then served with the white sauce poured over them. The white turnip is best for this mode of cooking. Take four young turnips, peel and boil in boiling water with a little salt. They should be whole and about a size. Boil till soft, take up and drain. Mix a little flour, butter, and milk together to make a smooth sauce, and pour over the turnips.

USE OF A LEMON—Never throw away the pieces of lemon after they have been squeezed with the lemon squeezer. They will come in handy for removing the stains from the hands and other articles. Dipped in salt they will scour copper kettles nicely, and remove stains from brass work. They will take stains and dirt and odour from pans and kettles as nothing else will. The odour of leek and onions can thus be removed easily.

MOC HARE—Choose a rabbit that is young, but full grown. Let it hang in its skin for three or four days. Then skin and lay it (without washing) in a mixture made of a tea-spoonful of black pepper, the same of allspice powdered, a wine-glassful of port wine, the same of vinegar, and a pinch of salt, for forty hours, turning it occasionally. Truss, stuff, and roast it, just as you would a hare. Do not wash off the liquor that it was soaked in. Send it to table with a sauce of good thick gravy, and a glass dish of black currants jelly.

RICE PUDDING—Take one teacupful of whole rice, two breakfast cupfuls of milk, one table-spoonful of sugar, one tablespoonful of marmalade, two eggs. Wash the rice well, and put it on to boil in a small pan with a breakfast cupful of water; let it boil for five minutes, then pour in the milk and allow it to boil for half-an-hour without stirring it; take the pan from the fire, and add the sugar and marmalade, and stir well; beat up the eggs, and add them last, mixing all together; then pour into a pudding-dish, and bake in the oven or in front of the fire for half-an-hour. A handful of currants may be used instead of the marmalade, but they must first be washed and dried.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MUSICAL notes, as now used, were invented in 1380.

BLOTTING paper is made of cotton rags boiled in soda.

A BEAR does not weigh the one-hundredth part of an ounce.

YAWNING is caused by a deficiency of air supply to the lungs.

It is said that four-fifths of all the hailstorms occur in the day-time.

Two centuries and seven different men claim the invention of gunpowder.

The old-time idea of the unwholesomeness of lobster has given way before modern light.

HYMNOLOGISTS give 1697 as the year in which Bishop Ken wrote the "Doxology" as the last verse of his morning and evening hymns.

To prevent disputes between cabinmen and their passengers, a London mechanic has constructed a machine which is hung in the cab, and registers the exact distance travelled by the vehicle.

CALICO printing originated in India. It was imported into Holland by the Dutch East India Company, and spread into Germany. It found its way into England in the seventeenth century.

The "cat's whiskers," the long hairs on the side of the cat's face, are organs of touch. They are connected with the nerves of the lip, and their slightest contact with any object is distinctly felt by the animal.

The time is coming when a great saving can be made in the use of leather. Belting to drive machinery is now manufactured of links of metal, of rope, of cotton, and, by a new discovery, of paper. The durability and strength of the paper belts have sustained favourable tests.

The introduction of the automatic machine, has produced a new kind of thief. Amongst the industries of Birmingham may now be included the manufacture—on an extensive scale—of iron discs which the thief may drop, instead of honest pennies, into the slot of the machine that he wishes to rifle.

A LOCOMOTIVE has just been built at the Crewe works of the London and North-Western Railway which is capable of drawing a train at the rate of a hundred miles an hour. The speed attained by this engine in its trial runs between Crewe and Chester was ninety miles an hour, but this was shown to be considerably below its full powers.

WHO says the Indians are not learning the ways of civilisation? The red men of Alaska illicitly distill a vile alcoholic decoction which they call "hoochino." It is the most pernicious beverage ever invented; for the savage, when under its influence, rushes madly around in quest of someone to fight with and thrash for gore.

A FRENCH contemporary finds in the salutation of various countries the characteristics of the inhabitants thus:—English: "How do you do?" frank and active. French: "How do you hold yourself?" love of attraction, vivacity. German: "How go things?" mercantile. Dutch: "How do you sail?" alluding to their mode of locomotion.

"Did you ever see a deformed or crippled Chinaman?" asked a gentleman. There was a negative reply, and the questioner continued. "I don't think you ever will. If a Chinese child is born deformed it is made away with as soon as possible. Just how the babe is killed I do not know, but it is never permitted to live. You may travel all over the world and you will never see a crippled Chinaman. When an accident befalls one of them he is made away with too. This is a part of their religion, and they adhere to it closely."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

SIMPSON.—We cannot give trade or private addresses.

MAR.—A child's nationality is that of his father.

A CITIZEN.—Population (1851) London, 4,211,056; Ireland, 4,706,162.

JACK.—You had better apply to the Company in whose service you wish to sail.

VALENTINE.—No, the Bank of England has never issued one-pound notes.

SYLVIA.—A "hand" in horse measurement is four fathoms.

KIRK.—The height of Lord Randolph Churchill is about 5 ft. 10 in.

LONELY SYBIL.—The 49th are at Malta. We have not the names you ask for.

W. M.—We are sorry we are unable to find any information on the subject.

CURIOSITY.—No; that is a private matter, into which we have no right to inquire.

T. J. D.—You will find a statement of the legacy duties in *Whitaker's Almanack*.

GROG.—All timber, whether blown down or cut down, belongs to the owner of the land.

"PRINCESS ALICE".—The date of the sinking of the *Princess Alice* in the Thames was September 3, 1878.

DASSEY.—The First King's Dragoon Guards are at Shorncliffe, Kent, one squadron being in Egypt.

F. R.—The Franchise Reform Act passed both Houses in 1832; the Redistribution Act in 1855.

A. G. W.—In the absence of any specific agreement, the customary week's notice must be given.

GRIM.—The Railway Rates Bill will not come into operation before August, 1852, at the earliest.

JOOR.—You must come to some arrangement as to your liability before undertaking to collect the money.

G. D.—A hawker's license is required only when the goods are carried about and sold for immediate delivery.

EMELINE.—The address of the Servants' Benevolent Institution is 32, Sackville-street, Piccadilly, London, W.

SIMPSON.—If a receipt is given for 23 or over, whether for salary or otherwise, a stamp must be used.

M. V.—Martin Molton Sarasate, the famous Spanish violinist, was born at Pamplona, March 10, 1841.

F. F. B.—Birmingham was created a city 14th January, 1852.

HARRY COVERDALE.—We must refer you to some sporting umpire.

A LOVER OF THE THEATRE.—Mr. J. L. Toole, the actor, was born in 1832.

JUBILEE.—The Jubilee coins were designed by the late Sir Edgar Boehm.

PHIL.—The Derby was run last year on Wednesday, June 4.

JUDY.—The only "Land's End" we know of is that in Cornwall.

GREGORY.—We must refer you to the justices who made the order.

CONSTANT BRAHDER.—There is no lottery in connection with the Royal Academy.

IN A FLIGHT.—There is no limit if you fraudulently absent yourself from the country.

CAWSEON.—There is no duty on books imported into Canada or any other British colony.

PAT.—The male frogs when croaking make a greater noise than the female.

X. Y. Z.—France and England declared war against Russia March 17 and 28, 1854.

JOCK O'HAGLIDENE.—I. H. M. Captain founded September 7, 1870. 2. December 24, 1850.

CURIOSITY.—Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was educated at University College School, London.

DISGUSTED.—The hinder legs of some frogs are eaten, and are considered more delicate than the tenderest cutlets.

TRROUBLED OWN.—If you wish to produce the copy of the will as evidence you must, of course, have it properly certified.

NELLY BLY.—No; don't know the poem. The title is exceedingly vague. We should imagine there may be a hundred different rhymes so-called.

SCOTCH.—There is a Lord Mayor of London and a Lord Mayor of York. We do not know their official salaries.

SHAMROCK.—The Queen visited Ireland in 1840, 1855, and 1861, the visit being on each occasion made in August.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—Only a lodger's goods are protected from distraint for the landlord's rent. A servant's property is not so protected.

INQUIRIES.—1. "Back" numbers of the Times can only be obtained by advertising for them. The price will be a matter of bargain. 2. Yes, you will find in the Times the advertisement of a firm who keep an index to the paper. They charge 2s 6d. for consulting it.

COMPLICATION.—If the property was the deceased lady's absolutely, and she left no will, it would go to her deceased eldest brother's son.

RUDOLPH.—The red granite is always called Peterhead, and as a matter of fact the whole of it comes from quarries in that district of Aberdeenshire.

CEASAR.—The law simply provides that a gun or pistol may not be fired on the highway to the annoyance of passengers.

AMATEUR.—Lime light is made by directing an oxyhydrogen glass upon a piece of quicklime which is thereby heated to intense whiteness.

MISCHIEF.—The boys who broke the windows can be summoned, and if old enough may be fined; but their parents are not liable for the damage.

NAP.—Napoleon created, in all, twenty-two "Marshals of France," but Eugene Beauharnais, Josephine's son, was not one of them.

N. B.—The refusal of the mother of an illegitimate child to marry the alleged father does not prevent her from obtaining an affiliation order against him.

FOLLY.—Ireland is not in Great Britain, which includes England, Scotland, and Wales; but it is in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

FRANK.—There is now no special advantage in becoming a freeman of the City of London, beyond the membership of one of the City companies.

JENNY.—"Jenny with forty feet," often found in dark coal cellars, is the British contipise, and harmless; the troptical article is deadly.

POLITICS.—There were at the beginning of the year in the House of Commons about 306 Conservatives, 205 Liberals, 72 Liberal Unionists, and 85 Farnellites.

A LOVE-LETTER.

A letter, love, a letter, love,
I send to you a letter,
And every line's a link, my love,
And every word's a fitter
To bind your heart by love's own art
To one who loves you better

Than all the world. Although between
Your city and his prairie
A thousand miles do intervere,
Fair Fancy proves a fairy,
To bring your face, your tender grace,
Your truth that cannot vary.

A letter, love, a letter, love,
I meant to write a letter.
And every line a link should be,
And every word a fitter
To bind your heart, by love's own art
To one who loves you better

Than all the world. But still I pause,
With proloned moments palt-r,
And fear to tell you all because
I fear to fall, and fail-r,
Like one who lays with humble gage
His tribute on an altar.

So take the few poor words I send,
And read the lines between, dear,
And like a lenient lady lend
Your love to make them mean, dear,
All lips would speak to braw and cheek,
Could heart behind its queen, dear!

AN ANXIOUS WIFE.—You are not liable for your husband's debts unless you enjoy possession of his property. Besides, if the debt has not been acknowledged for six years it cannot be recovered at all.

DISTRACTED.—We could not tell anything about your friend, but we may advise you that even the War Office will not be able to give any information about him except you can give his regimental number.

GIGANTES.—Upwards of 200 articles are admitted duty free into Canada. It would, of course, be quite impossible for us to give the list, but name those you are interested in, and we will say whether they are on it.

DUMPLING.—It engaged for a month on trial he is entitled to his wages for the month. At the end of that time the engagement can be terminated by either party without notice.

EAGLE.—The only regiment that wears an eagle is the Scott Greys. The medal you refer to was probably one of those distributed by a foreign Government to British soldiers at the close of the Crimean war.

DISBURSED.—Nothing is cheap in either Paris or Versailles. Normandy would undoubtedly be both cheap and good for residence, but then the accent? Why not try Jersey, where living is cheap, climate excellent, and French pure.

ONE IN DEPAIR.—If you really want to regain the lady's esteem, set about it in a manly way, and begin with a frank and truthful statement of your regrets and your wishes.

INJURED.—Law does not compel a shopkeeper to serve anyone. He may refuse to deal at pleasure, in the same way as any member of the public may refuse to buy at pleasure.

M. T.—People don't patent "remedies," they cover them with a registered trade mark or label, then wrap them in a Government stamp form for the purpose. Registration of the mark costs 20s., and the stamp is 1s. for 1s. bottle or box, and so on.

A FIT OF BLUES.—You could probably drive away the blues and become more cheerful by entering upon a course of active and useful industry. Nothing chills the heart and banishes the feelings so much as selfishness and laziness.

FIDO.—Without the heat and light of the sun there would be no life on the earth at all. It is the sun's heat which awakens to activity the principle of life dormant in the seed case into the soil, and which is fed by the putrefaction or death of its surrounding case.

PROSPERITY.—If a man chooses to address his wife's parents as "father" and "mother," and it is agreeable to them to have him do so, there is nothing improper in it. There is no question of right or wrong involved in the matter.

IN A PICKLE.—The lad cannot get off on the ground of being under age. The War Office has decided that if a youth says he is eighteen years, and looks like it, he is not to be let go, though it should afterwards be discovered that he is younger than he says.

P. C.—There were several unsuccessful and partially successful attempts at laying an Atlantic cable. The late Sir Daniel Gooch was largely instrumental in making the effort of 1856 a success, but you must read up the whole history in some encyclopaedia.

CORPS DE LION.—No regiment is stationed all the time in England. If you are 5 feet 6 inches high you can join a hussar regiment; if one or two inches higher you may join either lancers or dragoons. The Scott Greys, for instance, take men of your age at 5 feet 8 inches.

BASHFULNESS.—An ordinary license, to be obtained through certain clergymen, costs about 40s. The banns need not be published, but three weeks' notice must be given. If you mean to be married at a chapel or registrar's office, consult the registrar for your district.

MONOGRAM.—You can never learn to speak the French language correctly without a teacher, unless you take up your residence in a French community, where you will constantly hear it spoken, and where you will have to speak it yourself.

RADICAL.—The word "aristocracy" comes from two Greek terms which mean "best" and "strength," and it originally meant a governing body composed of the very choicest men in the state. It now means what are called the "nobility" of a country.

BETH.—To detect chloroform in coffee, place a spoonful of ground coffee gently on the surface of a glass of cold water. The pure coffee will float for some time, and scarcely colour the water; the chloroform, if any be present, rapidly absorbs the water, and sinks to the bottom, communicating a deep reddish-brown tint as it falls.

A MODEST MAIDEN.—When a young lady thinks a man loves her, but is not certain of it, and wants to know just how he does feel towards her, she should patiently await further developments, in the meantime employing such maidenly tact as she may possess to bring the dilatory creature's sentiments to a focus.

BAUS.—1. At Bannockburn the English lost 30,000 men, including 700 knights; the Scotch lost 8,000, but only two persons of superior note were among them. 2. The total loss at the battle of Bysn was not over 2,000 men, 1,500 of these being King James's men, the remaining 500 King William's.

MILLIGEN.—Marriage with a deceased wife's sister is legal according to the laws of several of the British colonies, but the marriage would not be held legal were the parties to return to the United Kingdom. We cannot undertake to name the places where such marriages are legal.

OASTHODA.—A stout Arabian camel can travel, with a load of eight hundred pounds, at the rate of about three miles an hour. The swifter varieties, such as the light dromes, are said to carry a single rider over a space of from seventy to one hundred miles in twenty-four hours, and that for several days in succession.

H. V.—The boomerang, the missile weapon used by the natives of Australia, is made of hard wood, usually from twenty to thirty inches in length, from two to three inches wide, and half or three-quarters of an inch thick. It is curved or bent in the middle at an angle of from one hundred to one hundred and forty degrees. When thrown from the hand with a quick rotary motion, it describes very remarkable curves, according to the shape of the instrument and the manner of throwing it, often moving nearly horizontally a long distance, then curving upward to a considerable height and finally taking a retrograde direction, so as to fall near the place from which it was thrown or even very far in the rear of it.

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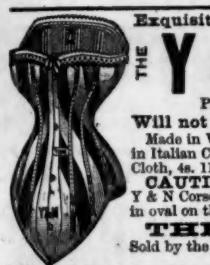
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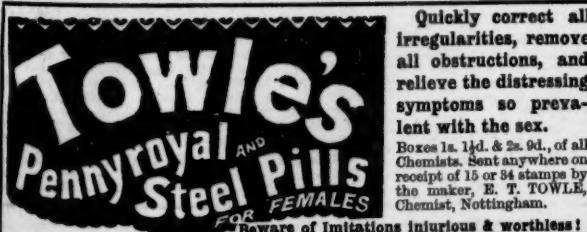
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